CONDITIONING
STANDARD BRED POULTRY
AND BANTAMS
FOR THE SHOW ROOM

STATE FAIR
GRAND CHAMPION BIRD

TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY
TEXAS AGRICULTURAL EXTENSION SERVICE
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STUDY YOUR BREED

In selecting show birds, become familiar with the high standards of excellence required in the showroom. Specimens must conform to the criteria set forth for a particular breed in the American Poultry Association's "Standard of Perfection." This book provides the description of the perfect type for the breed and variety under consideration. Study the proper color requirements and the standard characteristics until both are fixed in your memory. When the birds are grouped, it should be comparatively easy to select ones closely resembling the desired color and standard shapes. This first selection should include all birds that show merit.

After this general selection for shape and color, a more careful inspection is necessary. Any disqualifications that will bar a bird from receiving an award must be known and applied. These disqualifications are listed in the "Standard of Perfection." They include such imperfections as "stubs" or down on shanks or toes, a split wing, slipped wing, absence of spike on a rose comb, side spring on single combs, crooked backs, decidedly wry tail, leg and toe colors foreign to the breed and others.

There also are specific disqualifications for each breed and variety. It is a poor breeding practice to mate disqualified birds and perpetuate imperfections in an

Fig. 2. Different types of standard male combs.
exhibition flock. All show birds and those kept for breeders should be examined for disqualifications. If any are found, do not enter these birds. Do not use them in breeding pens or sell them to other breeders.

After selections for standard shape, color and disqualifications, evaluate birds on all show points. A perfect bird is exceptional. The clever exhibitor shows birds on which defects are least important. Each class of birds has a “scale of points.” The perfect score of 100 points is divided into sections. The comb is given a certain number of points, as are the eyes, back, tail, breast and other sections. Sections are divided further so both shape and color have points. Such divisions indicate the relative importance of various sections since the more important ones are given the most points.

The more common defects for some of the most popular breeds and varieties of standard-bred fowl are listed in this publication. The beginner may find matters simplified by keeping these faults in mind while looking over his birds. By using this table and the “scale of points” (see reference 3), it should be easy to select those birds with the fewest and least important defects. Since size and weight play an important part in awarding premiums, see reference 3 for weight requirements of all recognized breeds.

After gaining a working knowledge of your breed from the above sources it will be helpful to discuss the finer points with a recognized breeder or poultry judge.

Coop-training birds is a simple process if started early. It consists of placing each show bird in a coop similar to ones used by poultry shows about a week before the show. Handle each bird two to three times a day in a manner similar to that used in judging.

The procedure for properly removing a bird from a coop is a three-step operation:

**STEP – 1**

Approach the coop slowly, open the door quietly and prepare to remove the bird, head first. Maneuver the bird until it stands with its head to your right or left. Then reach into the coop and across the back of the bird with your right hand (left-handed persons will use their left hand), firmly but gently grasp the most distant wing at the shoulder. Keep the wing folded and close to the bird’s body.

**STEP – 2**

Rotate the bird in the coop so that its head is pointing toward you and the open coop door.

**STEP – 3**

Slide your free hand, palm upward, underneath the bird’s breast. Simultaneously, grasp the bird’s right leg (just above the hock joint) between your thumb and index finger while clasping the left leg between the second and third fingers. This places your index and second fingers between the bird’s legs. The keel bone should be resting upon the palm of the hand.

Hold the legs gently but firmly and lift the bird from the coop floor. Bring the bird out of the coop head first, keeping its head toward you. Release the wing and you will be in complete control.

After holding the bird for a while, open the wings and examine various parts of the body. Always return the bird to its cage head first and lower it gently to the floor of the coop. To determine body balance and “set of legs,” some judges like to drop heavy breed birds about 6 inches to the coop floor. A quick recovery means good balance and placement of legs.

When accustomed to this confinement and handling, the bird will present a good appearance to the judge. Many entries of good merit are never seriously considered by the judge because they have not been trained. Frightened birds tend to stand in a crouched rather than normal position; thus their true type is not revealed to the judge. The tail may touch the coop and be carried to one side, the bird may become restless from confinement, the coop litter may not feel natural and the bird may assume an awkward posture. Birds unaccustomed to handling may struggle when examined. Any of these things will give the judge unfavorable impressions; therefore, it is well to coop-train birds.

Some exhibitors try to remedy natural defects during coop training. High-angle tails are constantly bent downward, sagging wings are folded and pressed upward, defects in shape are camouflaged by training birds to

**SELECTING BIRDS**

Select only healthy, well-developed individuals which are near standard weight and approach the ideal type and color. Uniformity in size, shape and color is desirable. Uniformity is an indication of good breeding stock and makes a favorable impression on the judge and prospective customers.

Select birds early. Allow sufficient time for preparation and training. When running with the flock, the plumage often becomes soiled and dirty. These birds should be washed before being shown. Selection of exhibition birds is not all that must be considered. They should be trained and prepared to display their best qualities. Birds unaccustomed to confinement of the exhibition room do not “show” to their best advantage unless coop-trained beforehand.

**PUT THEM IN TRAINING**

Remove selected birds from the flock at least 3 weeks before the show. Treat for lice and put in a small house which has runs with plenty of green feed.
4. Hide them by the stance, etc. Other exhibitors remove off-colored feathers that can be extracted without their loss being observed. Such practices are unethical. Flocks are not improved by camouflaging defects, for no matter how perfect the appearance of such altered individuals, their breeding powers are no greater than their original imperfect condition. Purpose of coop-training is to assist birds in showing their natural condition to greater advantage.

If possible, eliminate birds with bad dispositions from the breeding programs.

DRESS THEM UP

Wash birds before exhibiting. Dirty shanks and plumage detract from a specimen’s normal merit. A dozen birds can be washed in 3 hours. However, practice on a non-show bird before trying to wash birds selected for exhibit.

Soft water gives better results than hard water, and a good grade of detergent containing a whitening agent is necessary. Have three tubs of water. Heat the first tub of water, but not too hot. If the washer’s bare elbow can be held in it for 2 minutes, it will be about the right temperature. The first water should have an abundance of suds made from a mild soap or detergent. Also, add 1% ounces of 50 percent malathion wettable powder or emulsifiable concentrate per gallon of water. The malathion helps rid the bird of any external parasites. The second and third tubs should be regular tap water warmed to about body temperature.

Two drops of bluing (use only on white birds) and 2 ounces of glycerin per gallon of water added to the third tub helps whiten, condition and give the feathers a sheen. Too much bluing may dye the feathers blue.

Rest the bird on the palm of the left hand, holding the wing tip with the thumb and fourth finger and immerse in warm suds. If the bird struggles too fiercely, dip the head under for an instant. All feathers must be soaked entirely; rubbing of dry feathers may break them. After the feathers are soaked, lather the bird’s entire body well. Rub or brush extremely dirty spots until clean. Rub with and not against the grain of the feathers. Be sure that all dirt has been washed off before removing the bird from the suds. If the legs are extremely dirty, brush them with a soft toothbrush. In extreme cases, an old dental probe works fine for cleaning legs, feet and around nostrils.

The bird will be clean if it has been washed thoroughly in the suds. Rinse soap from the feathers. If any remains, the feathers will not fluff out and an unsightly bird will result. To do this, soak the bird for 2 minutes in the second tub or rinse water. Then draw it through the water three or four times against the grain of the feathers. The third tub is also for rinsing. When birds are placed in this tap water their combs may turn purple if the water is too cold. Remove the birds from the water as often as their condition warrants. A thorough rinsing in the third tub will remove all of the soap. Do not fluff the plumage of breeds which are required by the Standard of Perfection to have hard, tight feathering (example: Cornish, Modern game, Old English game, etc.).

When the bird has been washed, towel dry and slip it into a grooming sleeve (5). This sleeve amounts to a straitjacket for poultry. The bird cannot struggle or get away, making it easier to handle.

A grooming sleeve is a canvas cone open at both ends. It has a 2½-inch opening at the small end and a 9-inch opening at the large end. Slip the bird’s head through the large opening and out the small end. Fold over the large end. With the bird in the sleeve you are free to work the beak, comb, wattles, shanks, feet and trim toenails.

Washing should be done as near the date of the show as possible. If feathers do not fluff properly, they can be steamed over a tea kettle to bring out their natural
shape. A bird can be washed in about 15 to 20 minutes, although it may take 12 to 18 hours for it to dry.

Some poultrymen speed up the drying by wrapping birds in turkish towels after the last tub to remove some of the water.

If the weather is warm, 70 degrees or above and not too windy, birds can be placed outside to dry. The fall and winter months, usually are too cold for birds to dry naturally. Chickens should dry slowly for best results. Have the room temperature around 90 degrees F, if possible. If this cannot be arranged conveniently, drying coops may be placed near (but not too close) a stove to keep the birds comfortable. Drying coops should be free of dust and dirt and shavings should be placed on the bottom. Another cold weather drying method is to place the birds in a large pasteboard carton with 2 inches of clean shavings covering the bottom. Then place a heat lamp at least 24 inches above the carton and allow it to shine on the birds. Old forced draft incubators with trays removed make good drying cabinets.

Crested breeds need more grooming than other birds (5). The crest especially needs a great deal of attention. After washing the body plumage, hold the bird by the legs, allowing the head to hang down. Submerge the crest feathers with the eyes above water, working the suds into the topknot until it is well lathered. In the case of an extremely dirty crest, sprinkle a few drops of mild liquid soap directly into the head.

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**Male**

- 33—shank
- 34—spur
- 35—foot
- 36—web
- 37—Toes
- 38—toenails
- 39—middle of hock joint

**Female**

- 31—shank
- 32—spur
- 33—foot
- 34—toes
- 35—toenails
- 36—web
- 37—middle of hock joint

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**Illustration showing fifth toe in five-toe breeds.**

**Cochin leg and toe feathering:** A, upper thigh; B—B, lower thigh; C—C, shank; D—D, toe.

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**Fig. 4. Nomenclature of shanks and toes.**
No amount of washing will brighten a crest that is yellow, brassy or dry from too much sun.

Remove all soap from the crest. Rinse these feathers in both tubs and then hold the bird under a faucet until all soap is removed.

While the bird is in the grooming sleeve, pull out any feathers which are too long or broken. Clean the comb, wattles and around the nostrils. A lady's hair drier (5) makes a perfect tool for drying the crest. Remove plastic cap and use only the hose to blow warm air over the bird's head. The crest and head should be completely dry before releasing the bird from the grooming sleeve.

After birds are dry, apply a little petroleum jelly to the shanks and feet to make them shine. Combs and wattles also appear fresher and more brilliant by rubbing with petroleum jelly. A mixture of equal parts of alcohol, glycerin and olive oil makes an excellent cleaning and polishing solution for shanks, feet, comb and wattles. Wipe the head and leg parts with a clean, soft rag to remove excess grease. Do not let any of the cleaning solution or petroleum jelly get on the feathers.

Although it is extremely rare, a bird may develop stubs after the skin of its feet and shanks are softened by the petroleum jelly or cleaning solution. Therefore, it is a good idea to redcheck all specimens before taking or shipping birds to the show.

Birds should be taken to the show in a clean coop. Dusting with corn starch helps keep the cleaned, white plumage in a freshened condition. The birds should not be crowded; be sure combs do not rub the top. If possible, place only one bird in a coop. Feather picking may result from crowding and the birds may become marred and soiled. Pad the bottom of the coop with deep litter to prevent bruises. Provide plenty of feed and water on express shipments.

**BENEFITS OF ACCOMPANYING EXHIBITS**

What the exhibitor learns at the show is as important as what he may win. He should visit the show often and stay as long as possible. Exhibits are often improved by grooming the birds in the showroom. Problems can be discussed with other breeders and much information can be obtained from the judge. Judges are usually busy, but most of them will answer brief, pointed questions. Many judges today are professional poultrymen and can give reliable advice. The most successful exhibitors and breeders today acquired much of their success by learning from their mistakes and entries in poultry shows. When time is given to exhibiting birds, obtain all the benefit possible from such a worthy endeavor. This is best accomplished by accompanying exhibits to the showroom.

**CARE OF BIRDS AFTER THE SHOW**

Exhibitors often become careless in handling their birds after a show, especially if the birds have not won high awards. Care is as essential after the show as before. It is advisable to quarantine them for at least 14 days after their return home; therefore, if any disease has been contracted, it will be evident before show birds are returned to the flock.

Do not dispose of birds after a show just because they did not place high in their class. Find out why. Often the best bird in the class will receive a low ranking due to a lack of maturity or feather condition.

**COMMON DEFECTS**

Different breeds and varieties have their own peculiar defects. These defects are serious handicaps to the specimen's worth as show birds and are of even greater detriment if allowed to appear in the breeding pens. Many poultry raisers are unaware of the seriousness of breeding from defective stock and do not realize how their flock will regress from standard quality if defects are not culled from the breeding pen. Every poultryman, should try to increase both the reproductive and standard characteristics of his flock each year. Then good specimens will become more numerous whether it be for utility or exhibition purposes. To aid in selecting show birds and breeders, some of the more common defects found on popular varieties of standard-bred chickens are listed. Poultrymen can do much to improve the quality of their show entries and general flock by becoming familiar with the list for their specific variety, eliminating as many defects as practical and possible from their breeding pens and entering those individuals free from such defects in poultry shows.

**FEED WISELY**

Show birds should be fed a complete commercial breeder ration with little if any supplemental grain other than free choice whole oats placed in a separate feeder. Whole oats are considerably lower in net energy than corn, milo or wheat. Therefore, birds can consume large quantities of whole oats without becoming overly fat. Early studies conducted by the Texas Agricultural Experiment Station indicate that whole oats tend to prevent feather picking and cannibalism. Hulls also seem to provide a factor which improves feather development, growth and quality. When feeding whole oats, birds should be given free choice granite grit.

A small amount of oily feeds, such as sunflower seed and linseed meal (O.P.), reportedly give gloss to the feathers.

An excess of yellow corn causes feathers of white varieties and Leghorn earlobes to become cream colored.
COMMON DEFECTS AND DISQUALIFICATIONS OF PLYMOUTH ROCKS ——

(D) = Defect
(X) = Disqualification

- Under weight (D) [more than 2 lbs. (X)]
- Knock-knees (X)
- Males often have flat or shallow breasts (D)
- Combs too large with more than five points (D); females often overly fat (D)
- Combs with thumb marks (D), double points, wrinkles (D) and side sprigs (X)

Barred Plymouth Rocks

- Solid black feathers in wings or main tail feathers (D)
- Smokey or indistinct barring (especially on backs of females) (D)
- Uneven tipped feathers (some white, some black) on back of females (tips should be black) (D)
- Barring too wide (D)
- Bars not running straight across feathers (D)
- Black breast and body feathers in females (D)

White Plymouth Rocks

- Black or dark ticking on feathers (X)
- Creaminess in quills of feathers (D)
- Horn color at butt of quills of flight feathers (D)
- Brassiness of plumage (having a metallic yellow color) (D)
- Split tails (same as Barred variety)

Buff Plymouth Rocks

- White or black in main tail and wing feathers (D)
- Lacing and mealiness in females (D)
- White undercolor or extremely light shade of buff (D)
COMMON DEFECTS AND DISQUALIFICATIONS OF WYANDOTTES

- Birds too large and coarse or birds too small (D) [over or under 2 lbs. (X)]
- Too rangy, lacking full rounded breast; bodies too narrow (D)
- Comb too high (D); absence of spike on comb (X)
- Comb not conforming to shape of head (D); double spike (X); inverted spikes (X)
- Sunken eyes; eyes too light or green in color (D)
- White in ear lobes (D) [enamel (X)]
- Back too short or too long (D)
- Tail carried at improper angle; tail too long or pinched (D)
- Slipped or split wing (X)
- Shanks too long or too short (D)
- Stubs and down on shanks or toes (X)
- Fluff hiding hocks (D)
- Poor quality feathers (D)

White Wyandottes

- Dark ticking on feathers [Gray (D); Black (X)]
- Solid black in wings or tail (X)
- Black (X) and buff (D) color in quill
- Creaminess of undercolor (D)
- Brassiness of surface color (D)

Silver Laced Wyandottes

- Smutty wing bars and shoulders (D)
- Lacing too narrow or too heavy (D)
- Frosting (D) (marginal edging or tracing of color)
- Mossiness (D) (irregular dark penciling of color)
- Lacing of hackle not extended around the end of the feathers (D)

Columbian Wyandottes

- Black in surface of females’ back (X)
- Light undercolor (D)
- Lacing of hackle not extended around the end of the feathers (D)

COMMON DEFECTS AND DISQUALIFICATIONS OF RHODE ISLAND REDS

- Birds too large or too small (D) [over or under 2 lbs. (X)]
- Males with too long shanks and shallow breast (D)
- White in ear lobes (D) [if enamel (X)]
- Eyes too light in color (D)
- Too much ticking in hackle of females; any ticking in hackle of males (D)
- Narrow backs and pinched tails (D)
- Poor feather quality (stringy feathering) (D)
- Stubs and down on shanks and toes (X)
- Smut or white in undercolor (D)
- Undercolor too light or lifeless in appearance (D)
- Black on surface, especially over shoulders (D)

Fig. 9. Split wing.

- Slipped or split wings (X)
- Wine colored or too light surface (D)
- Unevenness of surface color (D)
- Too large (D) and irregular single combs (D); side sprigs (X); uneven serrations (D)
- Rose combs too large or with spike not following shape of head (D)
- Twisted feathers in wing primaries (X)

COMMON DEFECTS AND DISQUALIFICATIONS OF LIGHT BRAHMAS

- Lack of distinct contrast between white and black markings (D)
- Indistinct lacing not extending around end of feathers in hackle (D)
- Males lacking lacing on saddle and coverts (D)
- Black ticking on white areas (D); purple barring on black areas (D)
- Gray in wings (D); undercolor too light (D)
- Lacing too heavy in tail coverts of males (D)
- White spots in wing primaries (D)
- Solid black or brown feathers on back (X)
- Positive black spots on back in web of feathers (D) [15 percent or more (X)]
- Outer toes not feathered in the last joint (X) and lack of shank and foot feathering (X)
- Too small (D) [less than 2 lbs. (X)]

- Large, beefy single combs (D); blades too heavy (D) and turning to one side (D)
- White in face (D) [enamel in face of pullet or cockerel (X)]; too lightly colored eyes (D)
- Tails carried too high; pinched tails (D); wry tails (X)
- Poor station (D)
- Lack of breast; back slanting downward too much from shoulders (D)
- Wings carried too low; legs not in center of body (D)

**Dark Brown Lehorns**
- Yellow lobes in females (D)
- Yellow shade in hackle in females (D)
- Undercolor too light (D)
- Undersize (D) [females more than 1 lb. under (X); male 1½ lbs. (X)]
- Too light or too dark shades in end of hackle (D)
- Different shades in the color of the hackle, saddle and wing bows (D)

**Light Brown Lehorns**
- Short backs (D)
- Wing bows too dark on males; brick color on females (D)
- Black in back and saddle of male (D)
- Unevenness of color over back and wings of females [also for Dark Brown females] (D)
- Shafting back, breast and wings of females (D)
- Penciling in the stippling of hackle of females (D)
- Stippling on breast of females (D)

**Single or Rose Comb White Lehorns**
- Brassiness (D), creaminess (D), red (X), buff (X) or salmon (X) in plumage

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**COMMON DEFECTS AND DISQUALIFICATIONS OF LEHORNES**

- Double points, thumb marks and too many points on single comb (D)

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**Fig. 10. Vulture hocks. (As shown, a disqualification, except in Sultans and some breeds of feather-legged Bantams.)**

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**Fig. 11. Showing face section. (Any positive enamel white in this section disqualifies Mediterranean cockerels and pullets except White-Faced Black Spanish.)**

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**Fig. 12. Lopped single-comb. (A disqualification)**
- Red in ear lobes [cockerels and pullets more than one-third red (X); cocks and hens more than one-half (X)]; ear lobes too coarse (D)
- Body too coarse and too large (D); body overly refined (D)
- The pouter pigeon or game type with breast too prominent (D)
- Rose combs too broad; too high; hollow along sides or in center or not balanced on the head (D)
- Rose combs with spike following neck (D)
- Green shanks (X)
- Enamel in face [cockerel and pullet (X); cock and hen (D)]

- White in face, especially males [cockerels and pullets (X); cocks and hens (D)]
- Curved or arched backs in females (D); backs too short (D)
- High weak combs with tendency to lop in males (X)
- Rose combs too high and too broad; hollow rose combs (D)
- Slow-maturing birds (D)
- Red in ear lobes [more than one-third of surface (X)]

**Single or Rose Comb Black Minorcas**
- Purple barring; purple sheen to black plumage (D)
- Red tinge on wing bows of males (D)
- White in primary wing feathers of females [more than $\frac{1}{2}$ inch (X)]
- Tendency toward red eyes (D)
- Drooping tails (D)

**Single or Rose Comb White Minorcas**
- Tendency toward bluish cast on legs (D)
- Brassiness and creaminess of plumage (D)
- Tendency toward small size (D) [more than 2 lbs. under (X)]

**COMMON DEFECTS AND DISQUALIFICATIONS OF BLUE ANDALUSIANS**
- White in face of males [cockerels (X); cocks (D)]; comb too large or too coarse (D)
- Tail carried at improper angle (D)
- Arched back (X); side sprigs on comb (X)
- Faded blue color (D); rusty brown top color (D); uneven surface color (D)

**COMMON DEFECTS AND DISQUALIFICATIONS OF MINORCAS**
- Too small [more than 2 lbs. under (X)]
- Knock-knees (X); weak constitution (X); stubs (X)
- Tails too high (D); pinched tailes (D)
- Lacing on ground color (D); lack of lacing where desired (D)
- White in undercolor (D); white in web of feathers (X)
- Thumb marks (D), too many points (D) or lopping of comb (X)
- Down between toes (X); stubs (X)
- Sickles of males not darker than main tail feathers (D)
- Birds undersize (D) [more than 2 lbs. (X)]

- Spike of rose comb following neck - not extending straight back (D)

**COMMON DEFECTS AND DISQUALIFICATIONS OF ORPINGTONS**

- Birds too large or too small [2 lbs. over or under (X)]; body lacking depth (D)
- Short back (D); deficient breast (D); narrow back and body (D)
- Shanks too long (D); body set too low (D)
- Twisted (D) and lopped combs (X); thumb marks (D), side sprigs (X)
- Heads too long and narrow (D); off-colored eyes (D), usually too light
- Stubs and down (X); positive enamel in ear lobes (X) [cockerels and pullets (D); cocks and hens (X)]
- Males with split tails; feathers too long or too loose (D)
- Knock-knees in males (X)

**Buff Orpingtons**

- Uneven surface color; males too dark over shoulders and back (D)
- Black peppering, solid black or white in wings or tail (D)
- Undercolor too light, approaching white or being white (D)
- Too dark or light buff surface color (D)
- Mealiness in females (D)

**White Orpingtons**

- Creamy beak (D) [if yellow (X)]; shanks blue or creamy (X)
- Red in hackle and saddle of males (X)
- Red, buff or partly black feathers in plumage (X)
- Brassiness or creaminess (D)
- Black ticking (X)
- Fluff too low (D)
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