

Judging Poultry at the County Fair



At county fairs in Kansas, poultry can be entered in the open class or 4-H production and exhibition (fancy) divisions. Some counties offer a broiler competition. Here are judging criteria for each division.

Production Division

The production division is for birds bred primarily for egg or meat production.

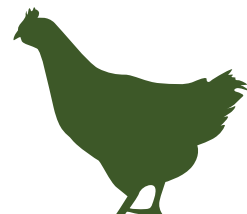
Egg Production Classes

Trios of pullets or hens belong in this class. Examples are the egg-type breeds of chickens such as White Leghorn or crossbreeds like the Austria White and California White, and dual-purpose breeds like the production Rhode Island Red, New Hampshire, Plymouth Rocks and crosses. Some shows, such as the state fair, have different classes for the egg-type and dual-purpose hens and pullets. This classification is recommended.

Birds in these classes should be judged on the following characteristics:

- Uniformity of size, head-type, shank color, and stage of maturity. Uniformity of plumage color carries weight if the trio is purebreds.
- Good egg production type, normal size, well feathered if pullets, free of serious deformities such as crooked legs or beaks, vigorous, healthy, alert, and clean.
- Pullets that show characteristic femininity and refinement, and sexual maturity as indicated by enlargement and redness of the comb and wattles.

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- Pullets should be free of signs of old age as evidenced by bleaching of the legs.
- Hens should show the traits that indicate good past and present egg production (see table below).

Meat Production Classes

- Meat-type chickens (broilers, roasters, capons) should be shown as pairs or trios of the same sex. As you handle the birds, try to visualize how the groups compare for the following characteristics if they were ready-to-cook carcasses:
- Uniformity of size, body conformation, fleshing (particularly on the breast, legs and thighs), and finish (fat covering).
- Well-feathered, particularly over the breast area.
- Freedom from defects such as breast blisters and calluses, curved or crooked breastbones or toes, bruises, cuts and tears, and hunched backs.
- Well-managed meat birds should be relatively free of dirt and stains. Birds are normally evaluated based on evidence of cleanliness over the life of the bird rather than how prepared the birds are on the day of show.

Exhibition Division

Exhibition or fancy classes of poultry include young and old purebred large and bantam chickens, and purebred turkeys, duck and geese. Depending on the show, entries of exhibition-type chickens consist of a trio of two pullets and a cockerel, two hens and a cock, or one bird of either sex or age. Entries of turkeys and waterfowl consist of a bird of either sex or age and waterfowl of either a single bird of either sex or a male or female pair.

Exhibition classes are judged on condition, health, cleanliness, and breed type and characteristics. Information on the characteristics of the recognized pure breeds of large and bantam chickens, and turkeys, ducks and geese is available in *The American Standard of Perfection* or *The Bantam Standard* referenced at the end of this publication.

The body, comb, feather color and pattern types of birds in these classes should be characteristic of the breed. The birds should be well developed, have well developed (but not worn or ragged) feathers, be healthy and free from external parasites, be clean, show no evidence of tampering and be free of defects and disqualifications.

Common Defects and Disqualifications

A defect is anything short of perfection. The cut for a defect should depend on its severity and how it compares to the severity of a defect of another bird. A serious defect or deformity that bars a bird from an award is called a disqualification. Following is a list of the major disqualifications by categories. Consult *The Standard of Perfection* for a detailed list and description.

Shape

Back — crooked, roached or deformed.

Beak — deformed in chickens and turkeys.

Beard and Muffs — absence of beard and muffs in bearded varieties and presence of a beard in non-bearded varieties.

Bill — scooped or deformed in ducks and geese.

Body — crooked keel or breast bone in all breeds of turkeys and Cornish chickens.

Comparing Good vs. Poor Layers

Trait	Good Layer	Poor Layer
Head	Short, deep	Thin, shallow
Eye	Bright, bold	Dull, glazed
Comb/wattles	Enlarged, red, waxy, warm	Shriveled, cool, dry appearing
Pubic bones	Thin, flexible, well spread	Rigid, close together
Feathers	Worn, some broken or missing	Maybe molting, new appearance
Abdomen	Soft, pliable skin, enlarged	Firm, withdrawn, thick, skin
Vent	Enlarged, bleached*	Constricted, dry, pigmented*
Molt	None or if in progress, a rapid molt	In progress, slow
Pigmentation*	Bleached head, beak, legs	Pigmented head, beak, legs

*Only applicable to yellow-skinned breeds.

Comb — one foreign to the breed or variety. For example, a rose comb so large or lopped that it obstructs the sight; absence of spike or more than one on a rose comb; a pea comb lopped below the horizontal where the bend occurs, except where this condition is a breed characteristic; a split comb with a side sprig; a cushion comb with a spike or spikes.

Crest — absence of crest or lopped crest.

Neck — pendulous crop in turkeys.

Plumage — hen feathering in males of all breeds except Sebright.

Shanks and toes (all breeds) — bowlegs, deformed foot or foot joint, duck foot in land fowl, enlarged and misshapen shank or hock, knock knee, web foot in landfowl, more or less than correct number of toes; absence of spurs in Old English and Sumatra cocks; presence or evidence of any down, stub, feather or part of feather from shank below the hock joint, foot, or toe on clean-legged breeds; outer sides of shanks not feathered on feather-legged breeds.

Tail — in all breeds except Araucanas, absence of tail feathers; one or more reverse tail feathers; split tail in cock and hen; squirrel tail (except Japanese bantams), and wry tail. Americana breeds have a tail; Araucanas do not.

Wings — in all breeds, twisted primary or secondary feathers (except in Sevastapol geese and Frizzle chickens), split wings, slipped wing, one or more reversed main wing feathers and one or more primary or secondary feathers with a split quill in all breeds; clipped primary or secondary feathers in all breeds of chickens and turkeys, and all breeds of waterfowl except Canada and Egyptian geese, and Muscovy, East India, Call, and Mallard ducks. Inverted wing tips in all breeds of ducks and geese.

Color

Bill — black in bill or beak of white-colored drakes; more than 10 percent black in bill or beak of ducks.

Earlobes — positive enamel white in red earlobed breeds.

Face — positive enamel white in face of all breeds except White-Faced Black Spanish.

Plumage — red or yellow in all barred, black and mottled varieties; black in quills of primaries and secondaries, and foreign color, except slight gray ticking, in all white varieties.

Shanks and toes — color foreign to the breed, except slight reddish tinge, or mahogany of pigment in yellow shanks.

Health Requirements

All exhibition poultry entered in county and state fairs must participate in the National Poultry Improvement Testing Program (NPIP) in Kansas. Waterfowl and pigeons are not required to participate in testing for exhibitions and swap meets. All exhibition poultry and breeding fowl must show proof of *Salmonella pullorum* testing to enter into any poultry show in Kansas during the year. Many counties and show superintendents will contact a local certified NPIP tester or become certified to conduct the test themselves. For more information about the NPIP program in Kansas and a list of approved, licensed blood testers, contact the Kansas Department of Agriculture.

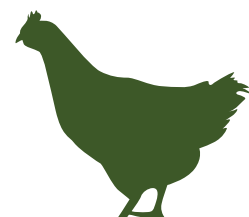
Show Preparation Checklist

1. Review classes from the exhibitor's handbook.
2. Establish check-in times, number of days for display, and check-out procedures.
3. Secure ribbons and trophies.
4. Secure a judge for the show.
5. Secure a certified tester to meet the state disease testing requirements.
6. Survey and inspect show cages to ensure there are enough cages to meet the number and types of poultry and waterfowl expected.
7. Prepare a management plan for feed, water, and environment during the display.

References

The American Standard of Perfection, American Poultry Association, Inc., 133 Millville Street, Mendon, MA 01756 (Price-\$48.00), the web address is <http://www.ampltya.com>.

The Bantam Standard, American Bantam Association, PO Box 127, Augusta, NJ 07822, contains information only on bantams, the web address is <http://www.bantamclub.com>.



Rules for Judges to Consider

1. In the 4-H classes, do not give a purple ribbon or qualify an entry for the state fair if it has an obvious disqualification.
2. Encourage the youth to be present when you judge and be willing to explain the basis of your placings. Exhibitors love to talk to the judges.
3. Handle and examine every bird in the contest. First impressions can be deceiving. There may be other attributes where the entrant excels. Remember, exhibitors are excited about the judging process and want a fair evaluation.
4. Do not give a top placing to birds that are dirty, poorly groomed, or infected with mites or lice, regardless of how good their quality.
5. Emphasize both good and bad points of an entry. This will encourage the owner and serves as a learning experience.
6. Carry a copy of the *Standard of Perfection* with you and use it when in doubt.
7. Work closely with the show superintendent who is familiar with the different classes to be judged and the awards to be given. Show rules are seldom uniform.
8. Handle birds carefully, keeping in mind they are the pride of the exhibitor. Always remove a bird from the coop head first. Reach in with one hand, take hold of the bird's opposite wing so it stays close to the body and turn the bird around with head toward you. Slide your other hand, palm facing up, under the bird's breast until you can grasp the legs close to the body. Keep one or two fingers inserted between the legs and a firm grip as you examine the bird. Return the bird to the coop head first.
9. Be acquainted with sources of good breeding stock if asked for recommendations.

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