



Poultry shows in the past consisted of birds being displayed in cages and the birds being judged on their conformational merits. As one can imagine, this left little opportunity for interaction with the owners or the public. Today, more shows are incorporating a showmanship section to their shows. Each individual presents their bird to the judge in a way that demonstrates the bird's best production qualities. The judge can ask questions of each exhibitor and the owners can learn from the experience of the judge. 4-H has incorporated this into their protocol for poultry showmanship. Unlike a standard poultry show, the 4-H exhibitor is not judged on the merits of the bird in this section of the show, but is judged on his/her ability to show the bird to its best advantage.

Careful preparation prior to the show is necessary to be an effective show person. The calmness of the bird is a reflection of how much the bird has been handled and worked with prior to the show. As a show-person it is imperative that you start working with your bird several weeks prior to the show by handling them and practicing the different holds. To acclimate your bird to the washing routine, wash your bird several times

during the weeks before the show. However, **DO NOT** wash your bird the day before the show, because birds need a full 48 hours to re-oil their feathers and look their best.

Check your birds for external parasites, such as lice or mites, and treat immediately if found. **NO BIRDS** will be allowed at poultry shows with signs of parasites.

Showman should be prepared to answer various questions relative to production, health, nutrition, breeding, etc. about their birds and poultry in general. Showman should dress neatly in clean black or white pants and a white shirt with some sort of appropriate tie. A piece of black ribbon is fine for girls. The most important thing is that on the day of the show you handle your bird in a natural and comfortable way for both you and the bird, and at the same time allowing the judge to see what they are looking for. It is best to choose a bird proportional to your size. For example, bantam birds are better suited for younger, smaller youth. To help you show your bird to its best advantage we have developed the following procedures as the basis for correct handling.

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## HANDLING THE BIRD FOR SHOWMANSHIP

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### **Removing the bird from the cage:**

To remove the bird from the cage, reach in and pin the bird down and turn it so its head is facing the door. Place one hand beneath the body with the index finger between the legs and the remaining fingers grasping one leg and the thumb the other. Place your other hand on the back and remove the bird head first. Remember to always close the cage door after removing the bird.



**Carrying the bird:**

Still holding the bird as described above, and shown to the right, place the bird's head into the crook of your arm or with the head under your arm. You may place your hand on the back of the bird to control it, as required.

**Posing the bird:**

Pose the bird standing upright on the table. It is up to the judge which way to face the bird. Once the bird is posed and set, step back from the table with your hands behind your back while the judge inspects the bird.

**Showing the head:**

With the bird posed on the table facing the judge, place one hand under the neck of the bird, gently stroking the beak with your thumbnail until you achieve the desired position. To show the left side of the head use your right hand and vice-versa.

**Showing the wings:**

Pose the bird facing the judge placing one hand on the back. With your other hand reach under the head and neck and grasp the front (wing bow) of the wing and spread the wing to show all the feathers clearly.

**Width of the body:**

Present the bird, with outstretched arms, to the judge tail first and span the widest portion of the back over the hip bones with your fingers. Lift your hand off the back, keeping fingers at the width of the bird to show the judge.



### **Flexibility of the pubic bones:**

Present the bird, with outstretched arms, to the judge tail first, tipping the head downward. Show the flexibility by gently squeezing the pubic bones together with the thumb and index finger.



### **Width of the pubic bones:**

Present the bird, with outstretched arms, to the judge tail first, tipping the head downward. Show the width by placing the hand over the top of the vent and placing as many fingers as will fit between the pubic bones, then telling the judge the number of fingers.



### **Depth of the body:**

Present the bird, with outstretched arms, to the judge tail first, tipping the head downward. Show the depth by placing the hand over the abdomen and placing as many fingers as will fit between the pubic bones and the tip of the keel, then telling the judge the number of fingers.



### **Showing the vent:**

Present the bird, with outstretched arms, to the judge, tail first with the head down. Place your hand over the vent and using the index and second fingers spread the feathers to clearly display the vent.



### **Showing the preen gland:**

You may be asked to show the uropygial (preen) gland. Present the bird, with outstretched arms, to the judge, tail first using the index and second fingers to spread the feathers from the base of the tail, exposing the preen gland.



**Showing the under-color of the feathers:**

Under-color of the feathers can be shown in two positions.

**Under-color of the back:**

Present the bird, with outstretched arms, to the judge tail first with the tail facing down. Stroke the feathers on the back toward the head displaying the under-color.

**Under-color of the breast:**

By grasping the bird's legs in one hand, hold the bird's back to your chest, head up. With the other hand, sweep the feathers of the breast upwards, revealing the under-color of the feathers.

**Showing the breastbone:**

Using the same hold as described for the under-color of the breast, use your index finger and second finger to spread the feathers and expose the breastbone.

**Showing feet and legs:**

Show feet and legs by placing the bird's back against your chest, as described for showing the breast, with head up, holding one leg in one hand. With your other hand show the top of the feet and legs and then the bottom. Lastly flex the toes. Switch hands to show the other leg.

**Walking the bird:**

You may be asked to walk the bird around the table to show leg movement and indications of lameness. You must practice this maneuver until your bird easily walks with a minimum of coaxing.

**Placing the bird into the cage:**

Return your bird to its cage by carrying it as previously described and placing the bird into the cage head-first, closing the door afterward. Return to the table to await further instructions or dismissal by the judge.



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