



Delaware 4-H Poultry Judging Contest Leader's Guide

Introduction:

The Delaware 4-H Poultry Judging contest is held annually during the Delaware State Fair in conjunction with the Delaware FFA Poultry Judging contest. The contest consists of several stations and includes topics such as grading eggs, grading carcasses, identifying parts and placing live birds. It also includes the presentation of at least one set of oral reasons. The contest is organized by officials from both the University of Delaware and Delaware State University. Judging contest are utilized by the Delaware 4-H program to develop critical thinking skills, such as comparing and contrasting, decision making, and oral communication as well as to enhance project knowledge.

Contest Format:

The State 4-H Poultry Judging Contest is held in the Thurman Adams Paddock at Harrington Raceway. Contestants should report at least 10 minutes prior to the start of the contest to receive their scorecards and any special instructions. They should come prepared with a clipboard and a pen or pencil. Judging and placing cards are provided.

Youth participants are divided into groups and placed at various stations. All participants compete against each other regardless of age or experience. They rotate through the stations until all participants have completed all stations. Approximately 10 minutes is allowed per class. The stations consist of judging the following classes:

- Judging live hens for past production
- Oral reasons on hen placing
- Judging ready to cook (RTC) market poultry (broilers and/or roasters)
- Grading eggs on interior quality
- Grading eggs on exterior quality
- Grading eggs on broken out quality
- Identifying broiler parts

Judging Live Hens for Past Production

Hens used in the past production classes are typically leghorn type hybrids. Birds may be handled. The bird that has laid the most eggs to date should be placed first, the next highest second, the next highest third, and the poorest layer should be placed fourth. This is placing by comparison. Hens are placed on the following criteria (in order of importance):

1. Pigment loss
2. Handling Qualities
3. Abdominal Capacity
4. Molt

Sometimes, depending on the class, it can be placed on pigment loss alone. Birds remove yellow pigment from their bodies and place it in the yolk of the egg. If the placing order cannot be determined on pigment alone, then the other criteria in that specific order need to be taken in to account.

Oral Reasons on Past Production Hens

Youth are expected to give a set of oral reasons on the past production hen class designated as the oral reasons class. Technically they should not exceed two minutes in length. Oral reasons are judged on criteria such as terminology, organization, accuracy, relevancy and presentation. A child will score higher if they can deliver their oral reasons without the use of notes. Sometimes after the delivery of oral reasons, the judge will ask the child a few specific questions to see how well they understood or observed the class.

Judging Ready to Cook (RTC) Market Poultry

In the Delaware contest we typically judge two classes of ready to cook poultry, broilers and roasters. Each class consists of ten individuals hanging from shanks so that all of the carcass can be observed. The birds cannot be touched or handled. Grades (A, B or C) are assigned to the carcasses based on amounts of exposed flesh, broken or disjointed bones, protruding bones, and missing parts. Discoloration should be disregarded.

Broiler Parts ID

Youth are expected to identify 10 broiler parts from a potential list of 17. Each part will be displayed on a plate and may not be handled. Potential parts include: whole breast, split breast, breast with ribs, boneless breast, breast quarter, breast tenderloin, whole leg, boneless thigh, leg quarter, drumstick, thigh, wing, giblet-heart-gizzard-liver, neck, back, drumette, flat.

Grading Eggs on Interior Quality

In this class, white shelled eggs are candled for interior quality and are classified as AA, A, B, or Inedible. The eggs must be handled carefully to preserve them for others that still have to judge. A candler shines a strong beam of light into the egg so that you can see inside. Factors such as the size of the air cell, quality of the egg white and yolk, and meat or blood spots are taken into account when grading eggs for interior quality.

Grading Eggs on Exterior Quality

In the exterior quality class, eggs are judged based on visual appraisal. They may not be handled. Grades used are A, B or Dirty. Participants should look for factors such as stains, adhering dirt or foreign matter, shell texture, ridges, shell thickness, and overall shape of the egg. Eggs cannot be handled.

Judging Eggs on Broken Out Quality

The broken out egg class is typically done at the beginning of the contest or at the end of the contest so that all contestants can look at the eggs together. Broken out eggs degrade rapidly, especially in the heat of the summer at the Delaware State Fair. Over the time it takes to run the contest, this could mean a change in grade. To combat this problem, contest officials have all participants do this part at the same time. Ten eggs are broken out on a flat surface and are graded as AA, A, B, or Inedible. Neither the eggs nor the containers can be touched by contestants. The quality of the yolk, thickness of the albumen, shape of the broken out egg, and spots are all taken into account.

Eligibility of Participants:

Participants must be current Delaware 4-H members. Each county is allowed 10 participants for no more than 30 contestants total. If a county does not fill all ten of its slots, then those unused slots become available for other counties to use. Individual counties determine the selection process to fill those slots. Typically if a child would like to participate in poultry judging, there is space for them to do so. Project groups are welcome and encouraged to do some of their own training. The University tries to offer a mock contest annually for both 4-H and FFA. This is normally done in June or early July in preparation for the state fair. Gathering the supplies to set up and run the entire contest can be very time consuming and labor intensive. For this reason we usually only offer the one statewide opportunity for training.

During the mock contest, participants rotate through stations, using the same score sheets they would for the official contest. Once everyone has completed the stations, class placings are given and discussed.

Available Resources:

There are several resources available for use by 4-H Leaders, parents and members to help prepare for the poultry judging contest. The Poultry Judging Manual (Nebraska Cooperative Extension 4-H 92) is available at your county office and gives more specifics on how to judge and place classes. In addition, the following judging videos can be borrowed from the Kent County office:

- Egg Grading
- Evaluation of Ready to Cook Broilers and Turkeys
- Identification of Poultry Parts and Poultry
- Judging Pullets and Hens

The web address for the National 4-H Poultry Judging Contest is:
<http://national4hpoultryandegg.psu.edu/judging.html>