

FITTINGS AND CONDITIONING BIRDS FOR THE SHOW ROOM

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Study Your Breed

For success in winning the blue ribbon on your poultry in the show room, know your breed and condition and train your birds so that they show at their best when the judge stands before their coop.

The successful breeder studies his birds by comparing them with the ideal he has set up in his own mind. To get a correct picture of this ideal, every poultry breeder should study the Standard of Perfection which is the recognized authority on all breeds. In addition, there are numerous sources of information such as breed magazines and publications of breed organizations. The following bulletins are available free of charge from the U.S.D.A., Washington:

F.B. 1506 - Breeds of Chickens: American, Asiatic, English and
Mediterranean Classes.

F.B. 1507 - Breeds of Chickens: Continental Breeds.

After getting a working knowledge from these sources it is always helpful to discuss the finer points with a recognized breeder or poultry judge and profit by personal information he may be able to give.

Select For Uniformity

Select only healthy, well developed individuals, several weeks in advance, which are up to standard weight or slightly above, and come as near the ideal as possible in type and color. *Uniformity in size, shape, and color is essential.* Don't overlook this point, as uniformity not only indicates good breeding stock but makes a favorable impression on the judge and prospective customers.

Put Them In Training

Birds that are selected should be removed from the rest of the flock at least 3 weeks before they are to be shown. They should be treated for lice and put in a small house which has runs with plenty of green feed. For a part of each day they should be confined in a coop so that they will become accustomed to being handled. Move quietly about the room and *handle* the birds gently so they will not be afraid of you. Examine the plumage each time you remove the bird from the coop. You will learn something each time you do this, and the bird will become accustomed to being handled when the judge examines it. Also teach the bird how to pose. If the bird tries to fly through the top of the coop when you walk before it, talk to it quietly, gradually getting closer to the coop each time until it learns to have confidence in you. When the bird will let you get your hand in the coop, as a soothing effect stroke the wattles gently. Then use a round, blunt-pointed stick to get it to stand correctly. The judge will use one, and if you have taught your bird to stand correctly with the stick, it will do the same thing for the judge. Throughout the entire training period, use patience and tact. Never become angry with the bird regardless of what it does. It takes time to train a bird properly.

Dress Them Up

There are usually a few broken feathers, some off-colored feathers, or some feathers that have not grown out properly, which can be removed quite legitimately. In the case of wing feathers, or main tail feathers, remember that it takes from six to eight weeks to grow new ones, so do not remove them just before the show.

The feet and legs of fowls should be soaked in warm water a few minutes and then scrubbed with soap, water, and a brush until they are clean. A little sweet oil or vasoline will make the legs look better if rubbed on after they are washed. *Be sure that you do not get any of the oil on the feathers.* The combs and wattles can also be made to appear fresher and redder by rubbing with vasoline.

The white colored varieties should be washed. It is wise to practice on a bird that you are not going to show, before you try to wash the birds selected for your exhibit. In washing have three or four tubs of soft water (tubs about three-fourths full). The first should be lukewarm, the second a little cooler and the third cool; and in the last, just about as much bluing as the housewife uses in bluing white clothes. Take the birds by the legs, holding the wings close to the body and slowly immerse so as to thoroughly soak the feathers. Then soap the bird until you get a good lather, using only a high grade soap. *Do not use laundry soap.* Rub *with* the feathers, never against them, being careful not to break any. After the feathers are clean, rinse off as much soap as you can in the first tub; then place the bird in the second tub and rinse it until you are sure all the soap is out. Transfer it next to the tub with the bluing and rinse thoroughly again. All soap must be removed or the feathers will stick together. After removing from the last tub, dry the bird with a bath towel and place in a clean dry coop. Be sure that the coop is in a warm room. If the weather is cool or cold, you should have a warm fire going, but do not place the bird too close to the fire. The washing should be done at least 36 hours before the bird is shipped to the show.

Do not use too much bluing in the water, or the bird will have to be washed again.

Feed Wisely But Not Too Well

Feed birds enough to keep them in good condition but do not get them over-fat as this causes them to become sluggish and stale. They should have mash, and plenty of grain, *but not an excess of yellow corn for white varieties*, as it causes the feathers to be creamy. Birds should also have green feed at least once each day. A very small amount of oily feeds, such as sunflower seed and linseed meal (O.P.) are said to give a gloss to the feathers.

Provide Good Shipping Coops

Whether shipped by express or not, the birds should be carried in coops which are large enough. A coop 1' x 1½' and 1½' high is about right for individuals. It is better to send each bird separately, but never send more than a pen of five in one crate. Don't forget to provide for plenty of feed and water on express shipments.

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