

# 4-H Chick Chain Poultry Project

## Selecting Birds for the Pullet Show

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### It's Auction Time

As you look at your birds, all the birds might “blend” together and you can't decide which layer to pick for the auction. Here you'll find some helpful hints.

### Identifying the Best Birds

As they grow, start to look for signs of outstanding individual birds in your flock. Use a band to identify the best birds for easy picking at the shows. The birds at the show will be used to replace layers people have already. To select, look at body conformation and sexual maturity, with some consideration given to the head, feathering, feet, and toes.

#### The Head

The head should be broad and somewhat flat on top rather than round, wide between the eyes, and moderately long. The face should be clean cut, smooth, and wrinkle free.

The skin should be fine grained and soft in texture. The comb should be substantial in size and rich in color. The eyes should be large and bright with the irises a rich reddish bay color and the pupils distinctly round.

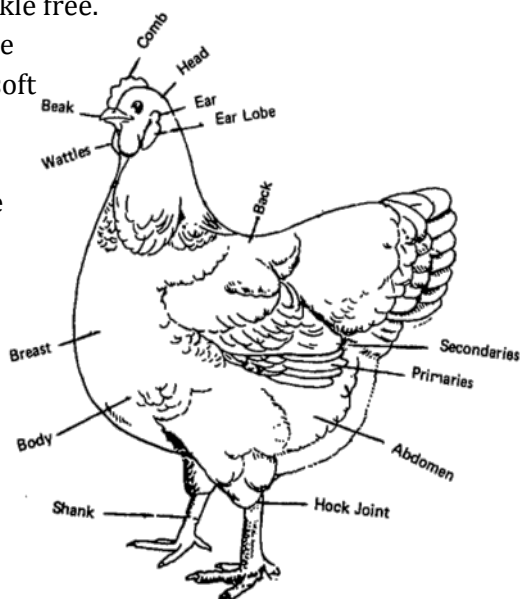


Figure 3) External Parts of a Chicken.

#### Sexual Maturity

The comb, wattles and earlobes should be well developed.

#### Body Conformation

The body should be broad, deep, and well developed. This is important for adequate intestinal

development, which is needed for quick digestion and absorption of food necessary for good egg production. Body depth can be determined by placing your thumb on the hip bone and spanning with your hand and fingers the side of the



Figure 1)  
Body Depth

body to the keel bone in front and in back to the legs. To measure heart girth, turn bird on her side, back toward you, with your thumb on the back near the juncture of the wings and body and your middle finger on the front of the keel. The heart girth should be deep allowing plenty of room for the heart and lungs.



Heart Girth  
Figure 2)

#### Feathering

Pullets should be fully feathered with the plumage in good condition.

#### Feet and Toes

The pullet should be well balanced on her legs. The feet and toes should be normal.

## Materials for Washing Birds

Keep your birds clean for the show. It is suggested to wash the birds 2-4 days before the show. On our website, [www.overton.tennessee.edu](http://www.overton.tennessee.edu), in the 4-H Chick Chain Section, you will find a video on how to wash your birds.

### Materials

Three Washtubs  
Mild Soap  
Vaseline  
Sponge  
Soft Toothbrush  
Towels



### Steps

1. Place three wash tubs containing clean water on a bench at a convenient height.
2. Use one tub for washing and two for rinsing.
3. Place warm water and mild soap in the 1<sup>st</sup> tub.
4. Check that the water isn't too hot by placing your elbow in the water.
5. Rest the bird on the palm of one hand, holding the wing tip with the thumb and fourth finger, and immerse in soapy water.
6. Do not put the bird's head under water.
7. Lather the feathers well, using a sponge so soap and water penetrate to the skin. Always rub with the grain of the feather.
8. If the shanks and feet are dirty, brush them with the toothbrush.
9. When the bird is clean, move them to the second tub with a slightly cooler water. Soak the bird for 2 minutes, then draw it through the water 3-4 times against the grain of the feathers.
10. Rinse again in the 3<sup>rd</sup> tub with cooler water to ease the birds into cooler air temperature.
11. Dry gently with a towel.
12. Use a teaspoon of Vaseline to gently shine the waddles and comb.

## Chick Chain Show and Auction

You are required to bring back 3 of your 15 birds to the show. The proceeds from this show go back to Overton County 4-H's Chick Chain project. It covers the costs of the show and paying for the birds. It is what allows us to return your deposit. For the betterment of the 4-H Chick Chain Poultry Project, you should present and market your project to the best of your ability. In return, you will have the remaining pullets at home, which you can use to start an egg laying business, harvest for meat, or sell after the show. You are representing all of Overton County 4-H at the show and maintaining the long term integrity of the program.



## Frequently Asked Questions

### Q: Should I bring any equipment to the show?

**A:** Cages will be provided. However, it is suggested you bring a little water and feed. Also bring a secure container to transport the pullets to the show. Your birds are required to be tested prior to enter the fairgrounds.

### Q: What should I wear to the show?

**A:** Exhibitors should take pride in their appearance. Appropriate clothing includes a 4-H Shirt, or other green or white shirts, pants, and closed-toed shoes. Shirts should be tucked in, hair combed, and appearance clean and neat. **No chewing gum, alcohol, tobacco or fire arms are allowed at the show.**

**Q: How do I know if a bird should not be chosen for the show?**

**A:** Do not bring birds with deformed beaks. Make sure they have the right amount of toes and they are not deformed in any way. No red nor grey eyed birds.

**Q: How will the bird's appearance be judged?**

**A:** Show that the bird is well cared for. The bird should be shown clean, with unbroken feathers, as well as clean legs and feet. The comb needs to be intact and free of scars and blemishes. The birds should not be molting. Birds with feathered feet should show clean, intact toe feathers, and no manure matted in feathers. Birds should be free of defects.

Breed Characteristics are based on the American Poultry Association's American Standard of perfects. The standards for poultry use this guideline. You are not expected to have perfect birds, but judged based on the bird's production value.

Make sure their neck is in line with the back. Don't bring a bird with broken or missing feathers. Make sure there is an absence of plumage.

**Q: How do I get my deposit back?**

**A:** You signed a contract. This includes bringing the birds to the show, turning in a record book, turning in a minimum of a 5 sentence paragraph stating why the chick chain is important to you and what they learned during the project, and participating in the poultry service project. Also, first time participants were required to attend the Poultry 101 class. As long as you meet these terms, you will receive your \$30 back at the show.

## References

D'Alleva, N. (2012, June 22). Free Cartoon Illustrations of People Cleaning Meat, Chickens, & Food. Retrieved March 17, 2016, from [www.spottedfrogdesign.com/free-cartoon-illustrations-people-cleaning-chickens-meat/](http://www.spottedfrogdesign.com/free-cartoon-illustrations-people-cleaning-chickens-meat/)

Miller, D. S., Burgess, A. P., Marks, L., Dillon, M., & Watson, M. (2015, December). Chick Chain Production Manual [PDF]. Alabama Cooperative Extension System.

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 **4-H GROWS HERE**