

# **So, You Want to Show Poultry but Don't have a Clue Where to Begin.**

In this little booklet we hope to take some of the fear out of stepping into the showroom for the first time.

This booklet does not have all the answers but is a general framework that will help you understand what is going on.

## **Free !!!**

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## Finding the Shows

One of the most common questions asked is how to locate shows. There are three basic types of shows: 1) 4H Shows, 2) Fairs, both county and state and 3) APA & ABA sanctioned shows.

4H Shows - There are fewer and fewer shows strictly for 4H projects as most have evolved into county fairs. Contact your local 4H extension office for information on the time and location of these fairs.

County & State Fairs - I'm sad to say that these shows do a relatively poor job promoting themselves to the new person. Your County Extension Office or State Fair office would be the place to contact for information on those shows. Most State Fairs follow the APA model of showing, but County Fairs often have their own structure and rules.

APA & ABA Sanctioned Shows – [www.poultryshowcentral.com](http://www.poultryshowcentral.com) is the best web site to locate shows in your area. This has become the clearing house for spreading the word on upcoming shows either by date or state.

## Health Requirements

Each and every state is different and I'm going to tell you up front it can be very confusing because often the State Ag Departments simply regurgitate regulations instead of putting it in easy to understand English.

Please refer to the show catalog for the required health papers to show or contact your State Department of Animal Health.

I'm sorry I can't be more specific here, but I only know the Missouri requirements by heart and even those change as health issues arise locally or in other parts of the country.

# The Entry Form

Open Show \_\_\_\_\_ Junior Show \_\_\_\_\_  
 Exhibitor Name \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address \_\_\_\_\_  
 City, State, Zip \_\_\_\_\_  
 Phone \_\_\_\_\_  
 Email \_\_\_\_\_

Total # of Open Show birds \_\_\_\_\_ @ \$4.00 each = \$ \_\_\_\_\_ \* Open Double Coop fee is \$8.00  
 Total # of Junior Show birds \_\_\_\_\_ @ \$4.00 each = \$ \_\_\_\_\_ \* Junior Double Coop fee is \$8.00  
 Total # of Double Coops \_\_\_\_\_ @ \$8.00 each = \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
 Total # of Sale Coops \_\_\_\_\_ @ \$4.00 each = \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
 Clean Up Fee due per each Family @ \$5.00 each = \$5.00 This is a mandatory fee  
 Membership \_\_\_\_\_ \$8.00 \_\_\_\_\_

TOTAL ENCLOSED \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Bantam (B) or Large Fowl (L)	Breed & Variety	Double Coop (Y/N)	Cock #	Hen #	Cockerel #	Pullet #
1.						
2.						
3.						
4.						
5.						
6.						
7.						
8.						
9.						
10.						
11.						

Above is a fairly generic entry form. Be sure to write clearly. Also make sure you give a good phone number or email address so the show personnel can contact you if there is a question about your entry.

At this point you need to know your exact breed and variety to be shown, and whether they are large fowl or bantams. Some shows allow substitutions later, but don't count on that, check the rules.

In most cases cock and hen are a male and female that are more than 12 months old. Cockerels and pullets are birds under 12 months. Some 4H shows require a specific date be used on young vs old, so check the rules.

It helps to include a band number instead of just checking the box for a particular bird. This way ownership can be figured out if a bird gets loose or a mix-up occurs.

You will notice there is a spot for “double coop”. If you have this option and select it, there is almost always an additional charge for it as it takes two coop spaces. Some exhibitors with very large or long tailed breeds prefer double-coops.

Notice the “clean-up fee”? This is becoming more common as shows have fewer people that help set-up and tear-down. Often 4H or FFA students are hired for this work and those fees help pay them.

## General Show Information

As you are preparing for the show here are three pieces of information that should never be overlooked.

- 1) Where the show is located - Shows are notorious for giving simple general locations such as the XXXX Livestock Arena. Well, if you are from out of town, you have no idea where XXXX Livestock Area is located, so do a little research ahead of time to reduce your stress.
- 2) Hours of the Show Room - Knowing the hours the show room opens and closes is important. Please be courteous and not show up right at closing time, expecting to unload a whole truckload of birds. If work or other life situations requires you to be running late, contact the show and make arrangements.

- 3) Times of coop in & coop out - There are usually designated times to bring birds into the show room and there will be a designated time when you can remove them. Again, that information is almost always in the catalog, though the coop-out may be a bit vague as often it is “after the awards are handed out following judging.”

## Cooping-in

And now the fun begins! You’ve arrived at the showroom and the butterflies in your stomach are dancing up a storm. CALM DOWN. Here is a simple outline that will help you navigate most shows.

1. Always carry a copy of your entry form with you to help with any questions that might come up.
2. When you arrive, leave the birds in the car and go locate show table or office. These are the folks that run the show and can answer questions for you.
3. You will be given an exhibitor list or told what your assigned exhibitor number was.
4. Go locate your entries cages using that exhibitor number. If you are unfamiliar with the layout of the show the show personnel can direct you to the proper section of the showroom. This is so much easier if you are not lugging around boxes of birds at the same time.

5. Go retrieve your birds and using band numbers put them in the assigned cages. Please be considerate when cooping-in and don't block the aisles. You aren't the only ones using that aisle.
6. Feed & Water are often provided but many prefer to bring their own. Usually there are water cups provided and feed is simply tossed into the bedding. State Fairs generally provide both feed and water cups as birds are there for a longer timeframe.
7. Stowing the boxes under the show tables, out of the way. If your show does not allow them to be stored under the tables, then remove them promptly.
8. Security is something that I find grossly over-exaggerated. In 30+ years of exhibition I never had a problem, but there are those that feel they should lock their cages with either locks or twist ties. Remember, if the cage is locked when the judge comes to it, it will not be considered for any placing or award.
9. Last Minute Prep should be done quickly and efficiently. Cleaning of beaks, combs, feet and toenails one last time helps improve your chances of winning.

## The “Judging Pyramid”

Understanding how birds “move up” from their individual placing to show champion will also help explain why the show is laid out the way it is as well as how the judging occurs.

Let’s pretend you have entered a Silver Laced Wyandotte Large Fowl pullet.

All the Silver Laced Wyandotte pullets will be judged against each other and will be giving placings from 1 – 5 (usually). The top cock, cockerel, hen and pullet will then be considered for the best Silver Laced Wyandotte variety.

Woohoo, you won Best of Variety (BV) on your pullet. Now she is compared to the other BVs for Wyandottes. There may be Blacks, Whites, Golden Laced, Silver Pencilled, etc. at the show and each of those BVs compete for Best of Breed – Best Wyandotte in this case.

Oh my, your girl is a good one and she won BV and now BB. Next she competes against all other BBs in the American Class (Wyandottes belong to that class). For Class Champion she will compete against other breeds such as Dominiques, Jersey Giants, Plymouth Rocks and Rhode Island Reds.

Can you believe it? She won Champion American. Now she’s competing for Champion Large Fowl. She will compete against the 5 other Class Champions.

What a bird! Break out the smelling salts. She beat out the other Class Champions to be Champion Large Fowl and now she competes against the Bantam Champion and Waterfowl Champion for Best of Show

So, in summary. A bird competes along this path:

- 1) Age & Sex
- 2) Variety
- 3) Breed
- 4) Class
- 5) Division
- 6) Show Champion

It is not practical in this booklet to list each breeds classification or the many varieties. Refer to the Standard of Perfection for that information.

Now, let's cover two interesting problems. Non-standard breeds and 4H/County Fairs.

- 1) Non-Standard would be something like a Golden Comet laying hen or a Jubilee Orpington. Those might be exceptional quality but per the APA & ABA rules they cannot win anything above Best of Breed.
- 2) Some 4H Shows and County Fairs have their own rules and regulations on how the birds are broken down. For example there may be a class for Production Hens. Or Prettiest Chicken. That is totally their prerogative (and is often fun), so don't get too strung out if those shows do not follow the APA/ABA structure, instead go with the flow and enjoy yourself!

## The Show

Though many shows run the same, even those have their own look and feel. Some things you might encounter at the show are 1) The show itself 2) An Egg Show 3) Junior Showmanship 4) A Serema Show 5) A Raffle 6) Cafeteria 7) Sales area, and etc. The show catalog will indicate what items are going to be at that show.

Showroom etiquette is something to keep in mind. Most shows are crowded. Often the aisles immediately around the judging are the worst. Please be considerate.

The Standard of Perfection is at the heart of all shows. Get to know your breed really well. Study not only the section on your breed but the general disqualifications and defects.

Judging generally follows the pyramid outlined earlier. When the show is large enough the classes will be broken up between different judges, then they confer for champions.

Poultry is judged differently from most other species. In our hobby you place the birds in the cage and the judge works the aisle, looking at each bird without the exhibitor being involved. In fact, many times the exhibitor isn't even aware when their bird is judged.

Don't bother the judges while they are working. Save your questions till they are done. Most shows block off the aisles while a judge is working in that section.

If you do have questions about your birds, ask specific questions but don't expect the judge to go over each and every bird you brought.

And above all else: **Be a good sport**

## The Coop Card



Let's review this coop tag. See that little check mark in the upper-left-hand corner? That is the judge's shorthand to help him with judging. Each judge has their own method of reminding themselves about the birds.

The "1" was written first as it was the best cockerel in the White Plymouth Rocks. Then the RV was written because it was the Reserve or second best White Plymouth Rock. Next it was designated as Reserve of Breed meaning it had beaten all other Plymouth Rocks, except one.

At the bottom of the card you see Reserve Champion American. Yes, there was "English" scratched out because judges are human and they do make mistakes!

Finally, the "Reserve Champion LF by a Junior" was written telling us this was the second best Large Fowl in the Junior Show.

An interesting question. What Breed and Variety was the Champion Large Fowl in the Junior Show? Believe it or not, in this case the tag does tell us this information.

Because our bird was the RV and RB, we know the top placed bird had to also be a White Plymouth Rock. What we won't know is whether it was a cock, hen or pullet. For that information you'd have to look at other tags. So, as you can see your tag sometimes tells you information about other birds in the show.

### The End of the Show

As the show is winding down, don't be that person that tries to sneak out early. Wait until word is given that you may coop out. As in all other things, be considerate while cooping out and hauling things back to your vehicle.

Also, make sure you cooped-out your birds, not others. In the melee of cooping out mistakes do happen.

## Upping Your Game

### Hatchery vs Standard-Bred

Let's face it most fanciers begin with either sale birds or chicks they gotten from a hatchery or farm store. Most of these are fair representations, though a few obvious culls surface such as single combs in Sebright bantams. Still, this is an excellent, low cost way for a family to enter the show circuit. They can get a feel for the process; decide which type of bird they like best and then they can move up to better quality.

Once you've settled on a breed you will probably want to seek out a knowledgeable breeder of your favorite fowl. Talking with them you can learn about the breed and they can give you pointers on either improving your stock or where to obtain better birds.

Buying better birds always ups-your-game but then you have to exhibit sound livestock husbandry skills to breed them going forward.

### Organizations

You should consider joining the American Poultry Association and if you have just bantams also the American Bantam Association. They both have point programs where you accumulate points for your wins. Additionally both have yearbooks that list judges, breeders, advertising, articles and more. This is how you stay connected to the hobby at large.

Also, you should consider joining the breed club of whatever fowl you choose. That group will be solely focused on the breed and will help with issues unique to that breed.