

Preparing for the 4-H Poultry Chain Project and Open Show

Preparing for shows can be overwhelming if you are uncertain how to prepare and what to bring. This timeline is a guide to help you prepare for the state 4-H Poultry Chain Project junior show and open show.

Show Prep Timeline (6-Week Countdown)

6 Weeks Before the Show

- Select potential show birds based on breed standard, quality, and temperament.
- Begin handling birds daily to prepare for the show.
- Review breed standards, disqualifying factors, and judging parameters.

4 Weeks Before the Show

- Begin detailed grooming and parasite checks.
- Clean and sanitize pens and coops.
- Monitor weight and health.

2 Weeks Before the Show

- Trim nails and beak if needed.
- Bathe birds if they require extra cleaning.
- Isolate show birds to avoid injury or feather damage.

1 Week Before the Show

- Give the final bath 4–7 days before the show.
- Practice showmanship daily.
- Assemble your supplies and prep travel crates.

Show Day

- Double-check bird cleanliness.
- Arrive early and have the necessary show supplies.
- Be confident and respectful during showmanship.

Bird Health and Conditioning Checklist

- Clear eyes, nostrils, and vent area.
- Bright, alert posture.
- Free of mites or lice (check under wings and near vent).
- Clean feet and trimmed beak and nails.
- Full feather coverage; no broken or missing feathers.

- Eating and drinking regularly.
- Coop is clean and dry.
- Birds are friendly and used to being handled.

Showmanship Practice

Practice Tasks

- Carrying the bird correctly.
- Posing the bird on the show table.
- Presenting important parts such as wings, vent, feet, and keel.
- Answering judge's questions (e.g., breed, age, parts).
- Speaking confidently about bird care and management.

Reflection Questions

- What is one thing I did well today?
- What can I improve tomorrow?
- What did I learn about my bird?

Packing List for Show Day

Show Supplies

- Show bird(s)
- Crates or carriers (Cutest Coop decor)
- Towels, wipes, and soft brushes
- Waterer and feeder
- Grooming kit (nail clippers, oil for comb and feet, bird treats)

Documents

- Record Book
- Health papers (tested within 90 days of the show)

Other

- Show clothes
- Notepad and pen
- Snacks and water for yourself

How to Choose a Pen of Birds (Junior Show Guidelines)

For the junior show, you are required to bring a pen of three hens. You may also bring one additional bird for showmanship. The birds should be uniform—similar conformation, such as size, weight, and feather color.

Selecting Birds for Shows

- Choose your healthiest birds—bright eyes, alert posture, clean feathers, and no signs of illness or injury.
- Make sure your birds conform to the breed standard. Look up your breed in the APA Standard of Perfection.
- Check for any disqualifications or defects, such as:
 - Lopped comb
 - Side sprigs or incorrect comb type for the breed
 - Stub feathers (especially in clean-legged breeds)
 - Crooked or missing toes, beak or leg deformities
 - Crooked keel
 - Broken feathers
 - Blind eye

Proper feather coloring and type are important. Judges are looking for birds that closely match the breed characteristics and show proper conditioning. Uniform handling qualities (body measurement) are also ideal for the 4-H Poultry Chain Project. For open show, be sure to follow standard, and be mindful of minor defects when selecting your birds.

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