



POULTRY JUDGING TECHNIQUES

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"Judging instills the confidence in those people who may be timid *and* humbles those who tend to be conceited."

(Quoted from an Agricultural Publication, 1992 submitted by Dr. Ben Mather, UF)

Poultry judging consists of carefully analyzing animals and measuring them against a standard that is commonly accepted as being ideal. In this case, purebred exhibition poultry accepted by the *American Standard of Perfection and the ABA Bantam Standard*.

Poultry judging also has been defined as a study of the relationship between an animal's form and function in both the fancy purebred at sanctioned shows and production/ commercial class's at most fair shows. Judging commercial/production birds is not judged by the APA or ABA "standard".

There are numerous benefits to gain from learning to judge poultry, both purebred and commercial birds. In the course of training and competition you are given the opportunity to interact with future leaders of the poultry hobby and industry. You develop a keen sense of judgment and confidence to make a decision that you can defend in a set of oral reasons if needed.

Most prominent poultry judges who are masters of judgment and selection have been affected by their involvement with poultry judging.

Participation in judging poultry builds your character and makes you a more complete person.

Taking the right steps:

Techniques for judging poultry can be broken into four steps:

1. Information: You must develop a mental image of the ideal for the species, breed and sex involved.
2. Observation: Successful poultry judging requires a sharp eye and a keen mind. As poultry judge you must learn to develop a greater perception for the animals that are being judged. Furthermore, these observations must be accurate and complete in every way.
3. Comparison: A successful judge must make comparisons of each animal against each of the other animals in the class. Judges must be able to weigh the good and bad characteristics of each animal and make their decisions based upon their findings. The animal that will eventually be selected to top the class will be the one with the "most of the best points for its breed."
4. Decision: The final, and perhaps most difficult, step involves ranking, or placing, the animals in the class. Many people have the necessary information and the ability to observe and compare but they may lack the skill and courage required to make the right decision. Judges' decision must be accurate and logical, and they must be able to stand by that decision.

Tips for judging a poultry class:

See the animals exactly as they are, not as you would like to see them.

- Break each class down into sections: 1st Cock, 2nd Cock, 3rd Cock, etc., using the same technique in each of the hen, cockerel, and pullet classes.
- When evaluating a class, your first impression is usually the most unbiased and most accurate if it is the result of careful analysis.
- For general observation of a class, maintain a minimum distance 2 – 3 feet if possible. This will allow you a full unobstructed view of the class. If you need to see two possible top place birds together, ask a clerk to move them along with their coop tags into cages that are side by side.
- When finishing a placing on a class, make sure to mark the coop card. Double check to make sure you placed the birds as you want them. There should be no room for error once you leave the class.
- Nearly all judges go into a slump at some time during their judging careers. When this happens, do not get discouraged or upset with yourself. Just keep your wits, maintain a positive attitude and work hard — you will pull out of it.

Benefits of giving reasons

There are two parts to the format when judging poultry:

- Placing the birds and giving oral reasons on your placing. The second part can be the most difficult because you have to learn to communicate your thoughts to the other judge or judges you are working with.
 1. You learn how to become organized; you get your thoughts in line with what you have written on the coop tag. You learn to recall a situation clearly in your mind that happened several hours ago or longer. You learn to express yourself in a convincing manner.
 2. You become able to clearly enunciate words.
 3. You learn to defend your decisions. This not only benefits you in judging poultry, it is also an asset for everyday life. You learn how to sell yourself and your ideas.

Evaluating a set of reasons:

There are several schools of thought concerning oral reasons. The style you choose to express yourself is of little importance. The truly important factors involved in giving an effective set of oral reasons include:

1. Accuracy of statements.
2. Completeness of all the important points.
3. Ability to bring out the important points between selections of birds.
4. Complete vocabulary of poultry terminology.
5. Correct grammar.
6. A sincere, emphatic and precise presentation.
7. Clear enunciation, don't mumble.
8. Voice inflection.
9. A logical order to your reasons.
10. Proper presence, e.g., eye contact, correct posture, no distracting mannerisms.
11. Use carcass terms in production classes.
12. Ability to communicate from a visual image of the birds either set by the purebred *standards* or industry standard.

Credits:

Interviews with sanctioned APA & ABA poultry judges (Thank you all: August Vinhage, Danny Padgett, Johnny Batson, Jamie Carson, Jim Sallee, Jerry Yeaw, Paul Kroll, Troy Laroche and others I have forgotten over the years – the names are gone but the lessons are well remembered)
Interview with Dr. Ben Mather, retired, University of Florida, Gainesville