



Showroom Courtesy's Visiting or Entering a Show.

If you have any interest in poultry, sooner or later you will want to attend a poultry show either as an exhibitor or a spectator. These events are held at county fairs, state fairs and poultry organizations all over the world with millions of people attending. Most attend to exhibit birds that they have raised but some attend just to admire the beautiful array of birds. Like all events, there are rules, written rules and unspoken or understood rules. Understanding and following these will help you have a wonderful poultry experience.

Usually fairs will list all shows on their web sites and give you the rules for entering while poultry groups have shows listed in poultry magazines, and newspapers such as Poultry Press.

It is my opinion that one should attend as a spectator at least 2 shows prior to showing birds. This will give you a better "feel" on how a show is conducted, how birds are entered, how the birds are cooped in the showroom, and how the birds are judged. This done, you are ready to attend the show as an exhibitor. Do not become discouraged if you do not win "Super Grand Champion" the first time you show. **Showing poultry is not all about winning, it is about raising birds, enjoying the breeding process, raising better birds with each generation you hatch, connecting with other breeders, and celebrating each time your birds place better than they did last time.**

After choosing the show you will attend, get a "show catalog". This will list the show rules, events and times, the judge, any awards, and an entry form. If you are going to show, then you will have to fill out the form and send it in before the deadline along with your entry fee. As soon as you fill out this form, **MAKE A COPY FOR YOURSELF**. With this copy, you will know which birds you will be taking to the show.

The information you provide will ultimately end up on the coop card that will hang on your cage and is used by the judge for placing your bird. All of the information you provide should be accurate, complete, and arrive on or before the deadline.

When your entry arrives, the show secretary will fill out 1 coop card for each bird you are showing using the information you listed. This card they will have the class, breed, variety, sex and age on it.

When all of the entries have coop cards written, they are sorted and made ready to hang.

All of this takes time and is the reason entries must arrive several weeks in advance. Correct and complete entries make this task go quickly. Unless you have an emergency such as a dead bird, do not ask the show to change your entry. Last minute changes involve much paperwork and sometimes even require the moving of cages in the showroom. Sending your entry fee money in along with your entry reduces mistakes and saves time at check-in. Some shows and fairs will not accept entries that do not include the entry fee.

Arrive at least 1 hour prior to the start of judging. This time is called "coop-in" There will be a lot of activity in the isles as people find the correct cages, carry crates and boxes in and out of the showroom, and do the last minute grooming.

Stop at the front desk where you will meet the show secretary and pick up a show sheet (Exhibitor List). This will have every exhibitors name and number on it, including yours. You will want to keep this handy during the show. After saying hello, unload your birds, find your cages with the proper information and your exhibitor number on them. Birds are usually shown 1 per cage and they are grouped by class, breed, variety and sex. Put your birds in and give them water. If the judging takes place the next day, you will want to feed them also. Now is the time to do your last minute grooming. At times, birds that are placed next to each other will start to spar. If this happens, place a barrier between the cages, such as paper or cardboard, preventing them from seeing each other.

During the judging, what is there to do? This time period is actually called the “show”.

Here is the best part: Your work is finished; now it is up to the judge(s). Use this time to visit other breeders, get something to eat, check out the sale area, enter some of the contest, buy some raffle tickets and always look at the beautiful birds that others have brought to the show. Larger shows will have booths set up where you will find poultry supplies, books or other items of interest that are for sale. Many will have breed clubs you can join. Some shows advertise that they are having breed “meets”. This means that a particular breed club is sponsoring winners of their breed with special awards. This usually results in many breeders showing lots of birds and it gives you a chance to see many examples of that breed. For example: If the Orpington club holds a meet, you will be able to talk with many Orpington breeders and look at many birds in the different show ages. Looking closely at these birds before and after judging will help you develop your skill of “looking at birds the way a judge looks at them”. The club will also give special awards to the Orpington winners.

During the day, you will see some of the isles roped off. These ropes are there to allow the judges and clerks uninterrupted time to do their jobs. Judges and clerks need the fewest distractions possible. You may watch the judging and clerking process from the next isle if you wish, *but please refrain from asking questions or making comments at this time*. When the judges have finished an area, the ropes will be removed and you can go see the results. Now is the time to see how the birds have been placed and try to understand how the judged reached his decision. Many times you will say, “They all look alike to me.” But over time you will be able to locate the differences that make a winner win and a loser lose. Judges visually inspect each entry then they do a hands-on inspection. Exhibitors can only visually inspect birds. The hands-on inspection may reveal things (good and bad) that are not visible from outside the cage. REMEMBER: judges have studied for years, worked and judged under other judges and passed their tests. They really make very few mistakes. The best part is that they are usually more than happy to talk with you when they have finished their work for the day. Most fairs set aside a time when the judge will be available to talk to exhibitors. All you have to say is, “Will you talk to me about my bird?” Then be prepared for one of the best lessons you will ever have about showing.

Did you win? Winners of contest, drawings, and the birds are either posted or announced at the end of the show. If they are announced, the crowd will gather near the announcer to listen. At times it is hard to hear over the noise of the birds. Trophies and ribbons will be handed to the winners. Mark the winners on your show sheet so you can contact them if you wish.

After the winners are announced, the show has ended. This is called “coop out”. This is when you get your birds loaded back into their carriers for the trip home. **Remember: It is considered rude to coop out your birds before the winners are announced.**

As soon as the birds have left the show room, tear down will start. This is when volunteers (such as yourself) help fold the cages, remove the water and feed cups, pick up trash, sweep shavings and place the equipment in storage.

With enough volunteers, the job is finished quickly and your labor is much appreciated.

The hobby of showing poultry is fun, but like anything else, it is work.

For me, the most surprising thing is that it is so addicting.....one show and you are hooked.

