

Poultry Judging Cliff Notes

Live Birds

Four hens are ranked from best to worst layers.

Hen are judged on three main factors. In order of importance these are:

1. **Persistency** – the hen that has had the longest period of continuous production (also called past production) and laid the most eggs; judged by pigment loss through bleaching
2. **Intensity** – hen’s current rate of production and determined by the handling quality of the hen and abdominal capacity
3. **Health and Vigor** – indicated by shape and brightness of eye, proportional shape of head and condition of comb and wattles.

Persistency (determined by bleaching) is the most important factor in placing birds. As hens lay eggs, they lose the yellow pigment in their body as it is deposited in eggs. Therefore, a bird that has lost more pigment has laid more eggs.

Bleaching order:

1. Vent
2. Eye ring
3. Ear lobe
4. Beak (corner of the mouth toward the tip)
5. Bottom of the foot
6. Pigment loss over the entire shank (front, back, and sides)
7. Hock and top of toes

The more bleached a hen is (in the above order), the more eggs she has laid. For example, a hen who has lost pigment on her hock and top of toes has laid more eggs than a hen who has a bleached beak.

To rank a class, first rank hens according to their pigment loss, then handling quality, followed by abdominal capacity. Good handling quality is characterized by the hen’s leanness and trimness. Large abdominal capacity goes with high egg production.

Make sure to take good notes while placing your hens as you will have to explain your placing to the judges during live bird reasons! A good way to take notes is to take your piece of paper and divide it into four parts:

<p style="text-align: center;">Hen 1</p> <p>Bleaching: <i>Ex. Bleached through top of toes</i> Handling Qualities: <i>Ex. Soft abdomen</i> Abdominal Capacity: <i>Ex. 3x4</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Hen 2</p> <p>Bleaching: Handling Qualities: Abdominal Capacity:</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Hen 3</p> <p>Bleaching: Handling Qualities: Abdominal Capacity:</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Hen 4</p> <p>Bleaching: Handling Qualities: Abdominal Capacity:</p>

Live Birds Reasons

After placing a group of four birds (see above), you must explain to the judges why you placed the birds in the particular order that you chose. This is called oral reasons.

- Compare within a top, middle, and bottom pair.
- State why the first one in the pair was better, admit or grant if there was anything about the second hen that was better, then follow up with what you ultimately faulted for. Repeat for the middle and bottom pairs.
- Stand still and try not to fidget
- Use notes if you need, but try not to read your reasons. Make good eye contact with the judge.
- Don't say "Number 1," instead say "Hen 1"
- Introduce yourself and state your rankings at the beginning and end

Example live birds reasons:

Good morning. I am contestant No. 20. I placed this class of White Leghorn Production hens 2-4-3-1. I had an easy top pair, close middle pair, and an easy bottom pair.

I placed hen #2 at the top of this class and over hen #4 because of pigment loss and handling qualities. Bird #2 is totally bleached throughout the hock and the tops of the toes. This indicates that 2 is a persistent layer and has laid for a long time without stopping. Bird #2 is also a more intense layer as evidenced by her superior handling qualities. Her abdomen is soft and pliable and pubic bones are sharp and flexible, while 4 had a hard abdomen showing signs of fatty deposits. Both hens had an abdominal capacity of a 3x4 finger spread. Hen #2 was also larger and wider than hen #4.

In my middle pair, I placed hen #4 second and over hen #3 because of pigment loss. I found that 4 had slightly less pigment on her shanks than 3, particularly on the hocks and tops of toes. I grant that 3 has a slightly softer and more pliable abdomen than 4. However, I still placed 4 over 3 because 4 has been a more persistent layer as shown by the greater bleaching. Both hens had an abdominal capacity of 3x4. Both hens also had bright and alert eyes, and red and waxy combs, when demonstrates their intensity of lay as well as health and vigor.

In the easy bottom pair, I placed hen #3 over hen #1 because of pigment loss, handling qualities, and body capacity. Bird #3 shows pigment loss in the shanks while bird #1 has only bleached through the bottom of the foot and shows intense pigment over the entire shank. Bird #3 has a softer abdomen and sharper, more flexible public bones, whereas #1 has thick, fat pubic bones. Hen #3 had a larger abdominal capacity with a greater spread between the pubic bones and the pubic and keel bones than bird #1.

I placed hen #1 at the bottom of the class because she lacks persistency as shown by the intense pigment in her shanks and lacks intensity as well, because of her fatty abdomen and pubic bones. She also had a narrow head and shrunken comb and wattles.

Molt was not a factor in placing this class.

For these reasons, I placed this class of White Leghorn hens 2-4-3-1.

Are there any questions?

Broken-Out Eggs

- **Grade AA:** High yolk, really small white thick albumen
- **Grade A:** High yolk, white thick albumen spread some
- **Grade B:** Low yolk, white thick albumen is spread out all over the plate
- **Inedible:** Blood or meat spots

Exterior Quality

- **Grade A:** Perfect, like the ones you buy in the store
- **Grade B:** Misshaped, not pretty, but still edible and could be used in prebaked products
- **Dirty:** Prominent stains or adhering material

Interior Quality – Candling

- **Grade AA:** Air cell size of a dime
- **Grade A:** Air cell size of a nickel
- **Grade B:** Air cell size of a quarter
- **Inedible:** Blood or meat spot

Ready to Cook

- **Grade A:** You'd be happy to buy it in the store as is
- **Grade B:** Could be cut up and sold for parts
- **Grade C:** Only good for dogfood
- You can't touch the carcass, but can turn it on the shackle at the top

Summary of Ready to Cook Quality

Factor	A Quality	B Quality	C Quality
Exposed Flesh Up to 2lb carcass 2lb to 6lb carcass* <i>*most common for contest</i>	<i>Breast & legs</i> 1/4" <i>Elsewhere</i> 1" 1/4" 1-1/2"	<i>All parts</i> 1/3 of flesh exposed on each part of carcass, provided meat yield not appreciably affected	No limit
Disjointed bones Broken bones	1 disjointed None	2 disjointed <i>or</i> 1 nonprotruding broken and 1 disjointed <i>or</i> 1 nonprotruding broken	No limit No limit. Any protruding broken bones.
Missing parts allowed	Wing tips and/or tail removed at the base	Wing(s) to second joint. Back area not wider than base of tail and extending less than halfway between base of tail and hip joints.	Entire wing(s). Back area not wider than base of tail extending to area beyond halfway to the hip joint.

Parts Identification

At the contest, use the process of elimination. Go through each item and think about what you know it is not.

1. Breast meat.....go to 2
Not breast meat.....go to 3
2. Contains bones.....go to 4
No bones.....go to 5
3. Leg.....go to 6
Something else.....go to 7
4. **Whole breast:** Big, both sides, bones
Breast with ribs: Both sides
Breast quarter: Wing attached
Split breast: Whole breast cut in half
5. **Boneless breast:** Like what you buy in the store; may have skin
Breast tenderloin: Chicken tender
6. **Whole leg:** Thigh and drumstick with no back
Leg quarter: Thigh and drumstick with back attached – bigger
Thigh: Upper portion of leg, contains bones
Boneless thigh: Darker, more red in color than boneless breast
Drumstick: Chicken leg
7. Wing.....go to 8
Something else.....go to 9, 10, & 11
8. **Wing:** Whole wing, but wing tip may be removed
Flat: Middle of the wing, small and flat
Drumette: Ette=smaller form of something; looks like a mini drumstick
9. **Giblets:** If you look at it and think “eww,” includes gizzard, liver, and heart; all very dark and small
10. **Back:** Starts at base of neck and extends to tail
11. **Neck:** May have skin or not