

To all Poultry Lovers showing at the Northwest Washington Fair,

The intent of this note is to remind you that showing poultry at the NWWF (or any other poultry show) puts your birds at risk of acquiring infectious agents such as viruses, bacteria, and external parasites such as lice and mites. They may be susceptible to diseases they have not encountered before at your own home.

The veterinarians will be checking each bird for symptoms of any illness and will send home any bird they see unfit for show or that put any other birds that enter the fair at risk.

For those planning on dusting their poultry, please do so at least a week prior to the Fair. Trying to examine birds that have recently been dusted is dangerous to those doing the inspection and makes inspection much more difficult.

Due to the recent threat of both Avian Flu and Infectious Laryngotracheitis(ILT), do not bring any bird(all waterfowl, chickens, turkeys, game birds or pigeons) that shows signs of sneezing, coughing/wheezing, eye or nasal discharge, open-mouthed breathing or lethargy. If you have had any recent illnesses or deaths in your flock please do not bring any birds to the fair. This will help reduce the spread of potentially fatal diseases.

Most all of you know about poultry lice, however, there is a threat of mites as well. Your birds will be healthier and cleaner if you bathe them prior to the fair. See the attached information on bathing your birds prior to show.

LICE--are tiny, wingless, 6-legged, flat bodied, insects. They lay their eggs on the host bird's feathers, especially near the base of the feather shaft. They spend their entire life cycle on the host bird, primarily in the feathers around the vent area, under the wings and abdomen. Most common treatments include cleaning and disinfecting the house as well as using an approved dust or spray made for poultry. The treatment of the birds must be done 2 weeks apart and ALL birds treated should be repeated as needed(usually 2-3 times.)

MITES--are a whole different problem. They are very very tiny and difficult to see with the naked eye. They have 8 legs and most commonly spread through bird to bird contact. They suck the blood of the fowl and can live off the host bird for 2-3 weeks. This means that they must be treated differently than lice. Mites often hide in the cracks and crevices of the poultry house and come out at night and attack your poultry. The life cycle can be as little as 10 days, which allows for a quick turnover and heavy infestations.

The treatment is very different as well. Birds must all be treated with the off-label use of Ivermectin every 10 days for up to 3-4 treatments as well as complete disinfection of housing, roosts and nesting boxes. Then the house must be completely dried and then all cracks and crevices filled and sealed with a primer/sealer. This is a very time-consuming and costly endeavor.

Most birds with mites have observable signs that may include darkening of the feathers on white feathered birds due to mite feces, scabbing of the skin near the vent, and generally an overall ill-thrift appearance of the birds.

The veterinarians inspecting your birds prior to entry at the fair will do their very best to prevent the spread of any infectious diseases as well as external parasites. It is critical to understand that viruses and bacteria as well as external parasites are not easy to identify. Thus, it is best to isolate your birds at least 4-6 weeks after the fair to prevent possible contamination into your home flock, dust or spray all birds with an appropriate poultry dust or spray once you get home and then 2 weeks later, and continue to inspect housing and birds for any signs of disease before allowing fair shown birds access to your other poultry for up to 4-6 weeks.

For more information, check out the following websites:

<http://www.agf.gov.bc.ca/cropprot/poultry.htm>

<http://ohioline.osu.edu/vme-fact/0018.html>

HOW TO WASH POULTRY

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The Showmanship Contest is an important part of the fair activity because it provides an opportunity for the youth to prove that he or she has trained and properly prepared his or her stock. This sheet will be confined to the cleaning and preparation of the bird for show. Information on handling, training, and presentation before the judge is contained in the Showmanship Guide, EM 2403, *4-H Poultry Judging Series*.

The old-timers always washed their birds because the competitors washed theirs and absolute perfection was the only way to win. Today we feel that the pressure is less intense. A clean chicken house with fresh, clean litter is the best and easiest way to produce clean, showroom chickens. These birds require only that their shanks and feet be scrubbed. We advise complete washing only for birds that are soiled.

Dirty shanks and plumage detract from the normal merit of a specimen. It is not a great deal of trouble to wash birds once the process is known. A dozen birds can easily be washed in three hours.

Materials Necessary for Washing Your Birds

- Soap
- Warm water (3 tubs)
- Soft cloths (Turkish towel)
- Clean cages (1 per bird)
- Dusting powder for lice and mites
- Electric hair dryer (Optional)

The Place. First, it is necessary to select a hot day or find a warm room in which the birds can dry. Birds should dry slowly for best results, and therefore, the room temperature should be around 90°F., if possible. An electric heater will help. The drying coops should be free from all

dust and dirt; clean straw or shavings should be placed on the bottom. If a wire cage is used, be sure it is large enough for the bird to stretch out without hitting her wing feathers.

The Water. Soft water gives much better results than hard water and a good grade of soap is necessary. Ivory soap chips or Lux is good. You must use a soap, as a detergent will remove the oils from the feathers and make them look dull and unkempt. Three tubs of water are necessary. The first tub of water should be warm. If the washer's bare elbows can be held in it for two minutes it is not too hot. The first water should have about one-half pound of soap dissolved in it and an abundant foam of suds whipped up. Do not rub soap onto the feathers as it is difficult to remove completely.

The second and third tubs contain clean water for rinsing. The water of the second tub should be about body temperature and that in the third tub should be cool. A few drops of bluing in the third tub will help whiten the birds. Addition of too much bluing may cause streakiness.

The Scrub Down. The bird should be rested on the palm of the left hand, holding the tip of its wings by the thumb and little finger of the right hand, and immersed in the tub of warm suds. If the bird struggles too fiercely, the head can be dipped under for an instant which usually stops this trouble. All feathers must become entirely soaked as the rubbing of dry feathers breaks them.

After the feathers are properly soaked, the entire body of the bird should be lathered. Rub or brush extremely dirty spots until every speck is washed away. All rubbing should be done with and not against the grain of the feathers. Be sure that all the dirt has been washed off before removing the bird from the tub of suds. If the

legs are extremely dirty, brush them with a stiff vegetable brush.

The Rinse. The bird will be clean if it has been washed thoroughly in the suds tub. The next problem is to remove all soap from the feathers. If any is allowed to remain, the feathers will not fluff out and an unsightly bird will result. To remove the soap, the bird is first soaked for two minutes in the second tub of rinse water and then drawn through the water three or four times against the grain of the feathers.

The third tub also rinses and is used as an invigorator to offset the drowsy effect of the warm water. When birds are placed in this cool water their combs may turn purple and care should be taken to remove the birds from the water to avoid chilling. A thorough rinsing in the third tub will remove all of the soap.

The Rub Down. Some poultrymen hasten the drying of the birds by wrapping them in Turkish towels after the last tub; thus removing much of the water. Its use seems to give best results. Holding the bird by the legs head down and causing it to flap its wings vigorously hastens drying, shapes the feathers into natural position, and accelerates circulation of the blood.

Birds are permitted to dry in the drying coops, and it is essential that they be kept both warm and clean during the process. Addition of a perch several inches above the floor will encourage the bird to hop up and preen its feathers in completely clean surroundings.

Use of Oil. A lot of youth feel that the best way to show a chicken is to rub it down with mineral oil after washing and drying. This is *wrong*. The only place that oil or vaseline should be used on a chicken is on the shanks or on the beak. Once applied, it should be rubbed off again (as you would polish a table, for example). *Never put oil on the feathers* as dust immediately settles on the bird and it looks sick and exhausted.

Trim the Nails. Older layers may require a pedicure. Clip the bird's toenails and trim up the rough edges of the beak if you are showing an

older bird. Pullets generally will not require this detail.

Final Details. Some exhibitors wash birds twice before showing. This gives a more attractive appearance, but washing once is sufficient. Washing should be done as near the date of the show as possible, and in case any feathers do not fluff out properly, small areas can be steamed over a teakettle to bring out their natural shape. (Hold bird a safe distance, near the steam, as steam can cause serious burns.)

A bird can be washed in about 15 to 20 minutes, although it may take 12 to 18 hours for the drying. The exhibitor should be sure to take the birds to the show in a clean coop and prevent soiling after the washing is over. Dusting with cornstarch helps to keep the cleaned plumage in a freshened condition. The birds should not be crowded, or the coop should not be so low that their combs will rub the top of it. It is well to place one bird to a coop, as fighting may result from crowding and the birds may become matted and soiled on the way to the show.

It is not advisable to wash ducks or geese. Several days in clean water with a clean, dry place to stand will allow most ducks time to get themselves into top shape.

Other Management Tips

Protect the Combs. Use open top or grill-type feeders for show birds. Reel-type feeders often are periodically overgrown and the birds forced to hit their combs while eating. This minor management problem often causes a lopped comb which is a disqualification for males.

Protect the Feathers. Nearly perfect feathering is essential to prize-winning birds. The cushion feathers on the female are soft and easily pulled or disarrayed by the males. Keep the males separate from each other if fighting becomes a problem.

Remove the Non-Show Birds Early. Early removal of birds with crooked toes, standard disqualifications or poor type allows more room and time for care of the better birds.