

2008 SUGGESTIONS FOR FINAL MEAT BIRD SELECTIONS
By Larry Lokai- Junior Fair Market Judge from Ohio

Each year many junior fair exhibitors ask on tips for final selection of bird/birds for the market show. Below is one way of many to select birds, plus has worked for the past 30 years for many of youth I have advised.

ASSUMPTIONS:

- A. You have fed the birds to gain preferred weigh desired for the fair.
- B. When ordering chicks, you bought quality chicks with a good pedigree.
- C. For seven weeks you have spent time managing the flock with special care.
(eight weeks for ducks, fourteen weeks for geese, and 20 weeks for turkeys)
- D. You have kept birds cool with ample feed, water, and soft shavings.

SELECTION PROCESS

- Step #1- Three weeks before fair, cull the defined poorer birds from flock
- Step #2- Leg band with numbered bands the remaining birds and weigh each.
- Step #3- Watch chicks walk and record birds that walk wide and are uniform.
- Step #4- One week before fair cull birds to three times what you need to show.
- Step #5- Daily weigh birds and record weights on your chart to see trends.
- Step #6-ALWAYS handle birds carefully wrapping hands around wings when handled (so birds can not flap against hard objects) and assume all wings are made of glass.

FINAL SELECTION FOR FAIR BIRDS

- 1. Sort out the widest and most uniform handling birds.
- 2. Select birds that weigh the closest to the maximum weight allowed.
- 3. When sorting birds lift bird from table with two hands with one hand on the back and your dominant hand feeling the breast for width and length when lifting birds feet off ground/table. **DO NOT PUT MARKET TURKEYS ON A TABLE**
- 4. For turkeys, reach your hand under standing bird and feel breast length and width noting the taper to the tip of the keel and fullness breast front as if you were milking a goat.
- 5. Once you get first feel on ground, have a helper lift all meat animals and hold from shanks with two hands with breast facing outward with birds head down and carefully examine the breast. Look for breast development that is 1 ½ times as long as it is wide, does not taper to end of keel, and carries back to a "U" shape rather than a "V" shape.
- 6. Now that breast have been evaluated go to the second trait for selection and evaluate width and thickness of drumstick as measured from thickest part of drumstick.
- 7. While bird is flipped upside down check for any defects, especially any breast blisters, bruises (especially under the wings), and any broken or disjointed bones.
- 8. Since meat chickens can drift 4-6 ounces and turkeys up to 2 pounds on last day, select birds that are the most uniform by feel, but close in weights. **DO NOT SELECT ON WEIGHT ONLY!!**
- 9. Once you have made final selection, place bird/birds in large cage with ample room to stand in cage/box and allow for ample air movement, not tight box.
- 11. Final selection should be based on breasts first, drumsticks second, and overall width, thickness and uniformity of bird/birds. **DO NOT** cull birds with crooked toes, or a few brown or splashed colored feathers.
- 12. When birds arrive at fair keep feed and water off ground in pen and attach containers to the side of cage so birds may not step in feeders and waters, thus stay clean.

GOOD LUCK!!!!