



4-H Parent Guide

4-H Poultry Project

A Guide for the Broiler and Exhibition Bird Project

Selecting a Poultry Project:

1. Exhibition poultry – Exhibition poultry are a year-round project and produce fertile eggs for hatching or consumption. You can select standard or bantam sizes and numerous breeds/varieties.
2. Broilers – Broiler projects take approximately 42 days but it is an intensive project. Broilers are produced for meat. When raising broilers, you must have enough to select a pen for showing.

General Care and Management

Health Care

Sanitation:

- Clean and disinfect housing before new birds arrive
- Remove and replace wet bedding

Vaccination

- Infectious bronchitis
- Newcastle disease
- Fowl pox
- Marek's disease

Internal parasites

- Good sanitation prevents and controls worms
- Deworm as needed

External parasites

- Lice and mites
- Pesticides – dusts, powders and sprays



Exercise

For broilers, place feeders and waterers on opposite sides of the coop/pen; raise feeders and waterers as the broilers grow.

Poultry Facts:

- Exhibition birds and broilers must be fed a complete feed.
- Egg layers need a minimum of 14 hours per day to lay eggs. Hens begin laying at 20 weeks old.
- The incubation period is 21 days.
- Broilers reach market weight by 42 days old.



Feeding Facts:

- Fresh water daily.
- Fresh feed daily.
- Elevated feeders and waterers are cleaner to use and help build muscles for broilers.
- Broilers – Feed “ad libitum.” Never let them run out of feed.
- Exhibition poultry - Feed according to the recommendation on the feed label.
- Feed a complete feed. A complete feed contains all of the amino acids, vitamins, minerals and energy required by poultry.

Project Costs

Exhibition Poultry

- **Bird cost** – Mature birds are \$5 to \$100 or more each. Chicks are \$2 and up, and fertile eggs are 50 cents or more.
- **Feed costs** – Feed runs about \$2.70 to \$3.60 per head per month (based on 0.3 pounds for a bird each day at \$15 to \$20 a bag) for standard birds. For bantam birds, costs are about a quarter to half that much.
- **Housing costs** depend on existing facilities and scope of project.

Broilers

- **Bird cost** – At 40 cents and the suggested minimum of 30 chicks to show one pen, bird cost is about \$12.
- **Feed costs** – 12 pounds per head at \$20 to \$25 per bag means about \$4.80 to \$6 per head over the entire project (6 pound end weight). For a 30 bird flock, that equals \$144 to \$180 for the whole project.
- **Housing costs** depend on existing facilities and scope of project.
- **Bedding Costs** – \$5 to \$6 per bag of wood shavings.

Housing/Coop

- Protect from weather.
- Protect from predators.
- Adequate ventilation.
- Standard exhibition poultry – up to 3 square feet of space per bird; some need more; individual coops.
- Bantam poultry – 2 to 3 square feet of coop space per bird; individual coops.
- Broilers – minimum of 1 square foot of coop space per bird; 2 or more square feet is better.
- Brooding – heat source.
- Crowding causes cannibalism.

Selecting Winners

- **Exhibition poultry** – judged according to the “ideal” of the breed and variety as described by the American Standard of Perfection (<http://www.americanpoultryassn.com/store.htm>); free of defects and disqualifications.
- **Broilers** – fleshing, confirmation, finish, feathering, freedom of defects; most meat per pen of three birds; identical three birds.

Glossary

Broiler – young chicken, eight weeks of age or younger, produced for meat

Layer – hen used to produce eggs for human consumption

Exhibition poultry – purebred chickens produced for the purpose of showing

Cock – male bird 12 months of age or older

Hen – female bird 12 months of age or older

Cockerel – male bird less than 12 months old

Pullet – female bird less than 12 months old

Standard poultry – large fowl; 4 to 14 pounds

Bantam poultry – miniature fowl, one-quarter the size of standard poultry

Pen of broilers – three broilers of the same sex

Class – a group of breeds originating in the same area

Breed – a group that possesses a given set of physical features

Variety – a subdivision of a breed

Strain – families of breeding populations possessing common traits



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Pub. 3406 (1M) 7/15

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Reference: Dr. Theresia Lavergne, LSU AgCenter Poultry Specialist



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