

PREPARATION FOR POULTRY SHOWING

Softfeather Breeds

Plan to wash your chickens 3-5 days prior to the show to allow their feathers time to settle. During this time, show chickens then need to be placed into a clean cage (no dirt!), preferably into a large show cage in a shed or the house (large old dog crate cages can work well) with pine shavings (as straw, hay and dark wood shavings can stain your birds). Ideally, soiled litter should be removed and replaced daily.

WASHING/PREP ITEMS LIST:

- Clean towels
- 3 large buckets/tubs (chicken must be able to fit in these), small tub (for washing feet/legs) and small container (for wetting bird)
- Wool wash, horse/cattle shampoo and liquid hand soap
- Blue or white horse shampoo (for white birds)
- Glycerine (to restore feather oils)
- Toothbrush or rough cloth (for washing feet)
- Toenail clippers (human ones for beak, dog ones for toenails), Emory boards for shaping
- Small scissors (for trimming eyebrows)
- Fine grit sandpaper (for smoothing legs)
- Nail tool (for cleaning out dirt from underneath scales in light legged birds)
- Hair dryer (optional, but it does help birds to dry quicker in winter)

WASHING SUMMARY:

1. Lay out clean towels on a table or chair ready to wrap up the chicken once it is washed
2. Prepare 3 buckets and small tub of warm water
 - a. Small tub: Hold the chicken and scrub feet and shanks with hand soap to remove dirt and faeces
 - b. 1st bucket: Place chicken in bucket and use small container to tip water over bird (not over the face), then use wool wash/shampoo to wet feathers further. Work this in taking care not to break the feathers (rub in the direction the feathers are facing, never the opposite direction)
 - c. 2nd bucket: If you have a white chicken use this bucket with blue/white horse shampoo or similar to whiten feathers (take care not to turn your chicken blue or purple!)
 - d. 3rd bucket: Rinse chicken in warm water and glycerine to restore oils lost from feathers
3. Gently squeeze as much water out of the feathers as you can without injuring the bird. Then burrito wrap your wet chicken in a towel and allow to dry off by squeezing/patting down gently
4. Whilst chook is wrapped up trim eyebrows and the tip of the upper beak if it is overhanging
5. Unwrap chicken and trim toenails/spurs and smooth legs (be careful not to take too much off the nails/legs as they can bleed and cause discomfort)
6. Dry chook with hairdryer if you do not have heated facilities for chicken to dry off naturally. Be careful not to break any feathers, be patient, it can take some time. Alternatively, chickens can be placed in a small clean cage in front of a fire/heater or out in the sun.
7. Put in clean cage

Hardfeather Breeds

Generally, they require minimal to no washing, however you must wash their legs. House in a clean pen.

Ducks

A half clam shell filled with clean water and wool wash or cattle/horse shampoo will do the job. Place this on grass/clean area and allow ducks to wash themselves! You can use another half clam shell with fresh clean water for ducks to rinse in. You may need to scrub their feet depending on the conditions they have previously been kept in. Remember to house in a clean pen afterwards!

SHOW DAY PREPARATIONS

Most preparation on the day is done out of the back of your car/trailer. Don't stress if you don't have everything first go, just keep adding to your show box list and have a look/chat with others as to what they're doing, as you may learn a new technique! Make sure you get there with plenty of time to pen birds prior to judging starting.

Show Box List:

- Ice-cream container for washing legs in
- Thermos or container with hot soapy water for scrubbing legs
- Toothbrush and cloth (to clean legs)
- Towels (to dry legs)
- Small scissors, nail trimmers and emery board for final tidy up
- Animal shining spray or similar (to wipe over bird)
- Small cloths, cotton buds (spray shining spray onto them and wipe onto comb/wattles/legs)
- Make-up remover wipes to clean any stains off feathers
- Water containers and food/treats (for birds after judging has been completed)

Tips for Prep at the Show:

- Clean the legs first and pat dry
- Put the shining spray on a small cloth and wipe onto comb and wattles. Repeat for the legs using a different cloth
- Clean off any poo on feathers with make-up wipes
- Put shining spray onto a larger cloth and wipe over the chicken to smooth feathers and provide the finishing touch
- Place chicken in the pen **head first** holding the wings to avoid damage. Smooth down any feathers that may be out of place from carrying the chook once the bird is in the cage
- You can throw a small amount of feed to your bird to help them settle in (not too much as this can extend the crop and alter the shape of the bird). Water containers should be removed prior to judging beginning and be careful watering birds with crests/white birds as they will dirty themselves again. Many fanciers wait until judging has finished before feeding/watering birds.

Compiled by Breanna Carr based on current anecdotal knowledge and own experiences of poultry showing. This document is meant as a guideline, and as you develop your showing skills you will learn how best to prepare your own birds. Good luck!