

How to Produce Broilers for Show

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To be a successful broiler producer you should:

1. *Select well-bred chicks.*
2. *Use a top-quality broiler feed.*
3. *Follow excellent management practices during the entire brooding and growing period.*
4. *Initiate and follow closely an efficient broiler production program.*

Broiler projects are popular with 4-H Club members and other youth groups. They are especially adapted to beginning members interested in poultry.

Broiler production requires a relatively short time from start to finish, usually 8 to 9 weeks. Quick and complete returns are desired with beginning members.

Some counties conduct special broiler contests, adding to the project's appeal. In small broiler projects, the birds may be used at home or sold locally or to special markets. In some areas, larger broiler projects can be developed in cooperation with a hatchery, feed company or processing plant. These companies frequently finance the cash cost of production.

Expensive housing and equipment are not necessary for this project. However, you will need a clean, dry house that can be ventilated, a brooder or infrared heat lamp to warm the chickens and feeding and watering equipment. Keep all records of expenses and receipts in D-557, Poultry Meat Result Demonstration Record Book. Tack D-556, 4-H Poultry Meat Result Demonstration, Mortality Record, on the wall near the brooder house door.

Clean and Disinfect House and Equipment

Clean and disinfect the brooder house or quarters at least 2 weeks before the chicks arrive. Scrub the house with hot lye water (1 pound of lye to 10 gallons water) or use a commercial disinfectant which contains Cresol, purchased from

your feed dealer. Clean and disinfect feeders and waterers with a quarternary ammonium solution.

Type Chicks to Purchase

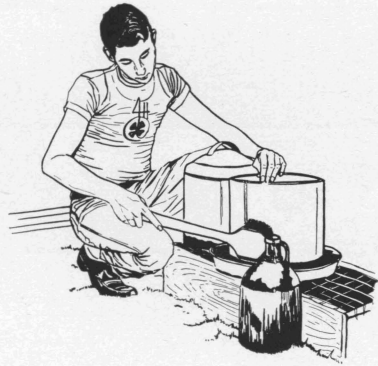
Select a predominately white Cornish cross chick. The Cornish breeding gives more breast and leg meat. The chicks should be disease free. Consult your county agricultural agent or adult leader before purchasing broiler chicks.

Purchase at least 50, preferably 100, chicks when growing broilers for show. With 50 or more birds, it is easier to select good uniform show entries. If possible, pick up the chicks at the hatchery, since the birds may contract diseases or chill in express travel.



Stir the litter each week to prevent packing. Hard, damp places in the litter will cause breast blisters on the bird.

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Clean and disinfect waterers with a quaternary solution daily.

Before Chicks Arrive

Be prepared for the chicks 2 days in advance. Allow at least 2 square feet of floor for each bird. A house 10' x 10' holds 50 broilers. A 10' x 20' house holds 100 broilers. Commercial broilers need 1 square foot per bird, but broilers for show should have 2 square feet. This additional floor space is important for show birds. Put 6 inches of litter on the floor of the cleaned, disinfected pen or house. Wood shavings, cane fiber, ground corn cobs or peanut hulls make good litter. Use the litter available and most economical. Stir the litter each week to prevent packing. Hard, damp places in the litter will cause breast blisters on the bird.

Regulate the brooder and run it 24 hours before the chicks arrive. Gas, electric and infrared bulbs are good heat sources for brooding chicks. If a gas or electric hover type brooder is used, it should operate at a temperature of approximately 92 to 95 degrees F. at the thermostat or at the location of the manufacturer's thermometer. Gradually reduce the thermostatic temperature 5 degrees per week until the chicks are 5 or 6 weeks old or until the outside temperature reaches 70 degrees F. Allow at least 10 square inches of brooding space per chick under the hover.

If infrared bulbs are used, two 125-watt bulbs per 100 chicks are recommended. The lamps should hang so that the bottoms are 18 inches from the litter. Raise them 2 inches per week to a maximum height of 24 inches. The brooder rings should be 8 feet in diameter. Place watering pans a good distance from the lamps to prevent splashing water from cracking the bulbs.

Various types of materials (cardboard, building paper and such) are used for circling the brooder. The brooder guard is placed 4 feet from the edge of the hover for the first 4 days and then moved back 3 feet for the next 3 days. By the end of this

first week, completely remove the guard and allow chicks full freedom of the pen.

After the chicks are 6 weeks old, heat seldom is required.

After Chicks Arrive

Provide all-night lights for your birds. Twenty-four hour lighting improves feathering and increases body weight during the summer months.

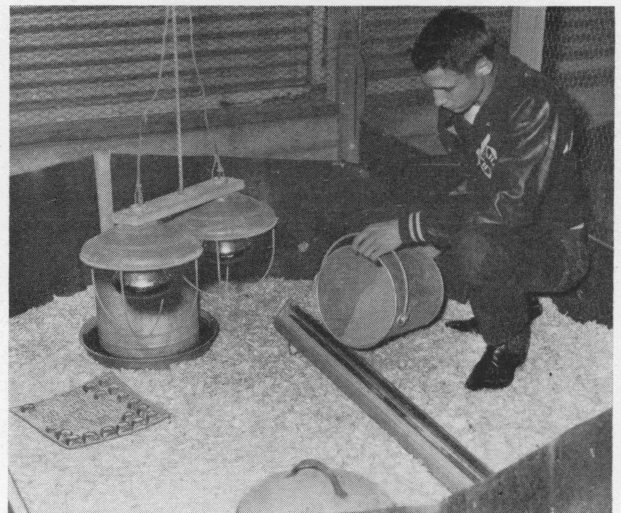
Feeding Recommendations

Start the baby chicks eating from small feeders and chick box lids. After a week, take the chick box lids away and put down more feeders.

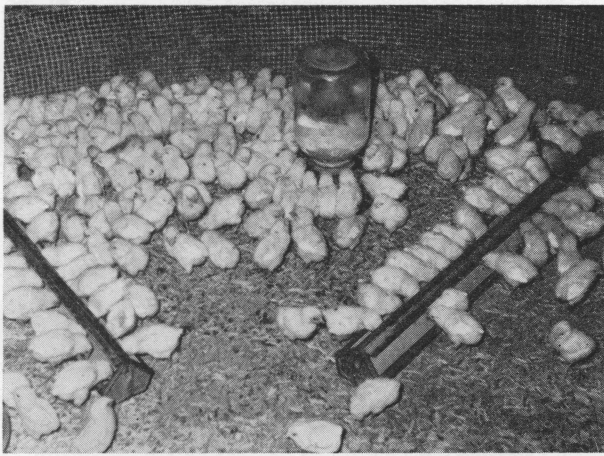
Feeder Space		
1 to 3 days	Feed at floor level	Put feed in cut-down chick boxes, chick box lids or paper plates and small chick feeders.
4 days to 3 weeks	2 inches of feeder space per bird.	
3 weeks to 9 weeks	4 inches of feeder space per bird.	
Water Space		
1 to 3 weeks	Three 2 gallon waterers per 100 chicks	
3 to 9 weeks	Four 2 gallon waterers or two 4 foot waterers per 100 chicks.	

Purchase the best feed available. Cutting feed cost may be harmful to the development of the birds. Make sure the starter feed is a broiler starter and not a replacement chick starter.

1 day to 6 weeks	A good commercial broiler starter at least 22 percent protein and the added fat should be above 3 percent. Also, this feed must contain a coccidiostat.
6 weeks to 11 days before show	A good commercial broiler finisher containing 18 percent protein and 3 percent or more added fat.
10 days before show	Take 2 pounds of cracked yellow corn and mix with 8 pounds of the commercial broiler finisher. Feed this ration until 3 days before show. Mix one-half cracked yellow corn and one-half finisher and feed the last 3 days.



Be prepared for chicks two days in advance.



Start with small feeders and waterers. Replace with larger feeders and waterers when chicks are about 3 weeks old.

The yellow corn is added to increase the fat and yellow pigmentation on the birds.

Feed the birds at least four times each day. The more often the birds are fed, the more they eat. Each time you enter the pen, the birds will stir around and eat. Keep fresh feed available for the birds at all times.

Feed moistened with milk or water sometimes is fed to broilers. The wet feed assists the growth of the birds because they eat more. All of the wet feed should be eaten within 15 minutes. Do not offer an amount of feed that will last longer than this. If the wet feed sours and molds, it is harmful to the birds. Keep dry mash available for the birds at all times.

Ventilation

If the birds become too hot or chilled, their growth will be retarded. When the birds are well feathered, open the house and allow plenty of fresh air to circulate. The temperature in the house is ideal at 55 to 75 degrees F. In hot weather, use fans to circulate the air.

During winter months, keep the upper wall ventilators open on the south side of the house after the birds reach 4 weeks of age. If the water freezes during the night, refill the fountains with warm water early in the morning. Freezing water in fountains indicates that the temperature is too low in the house.

A house that is too warm results in poorly feathered and poorly fleshed birds and may cause some of the birds to start feather picking and cannibalism.

A range shelter with a solid, litter-covered floor provides good ventilation for growing broilers for

show. *Wire floors cause breast blisters.* Building paper can be placed on the sides of a range shelter during the brooding period and removed gradually as the chicks become feathered. If a range shelter is used, place it under shade trees during the summer months.

Feather Picking and Cannibalism

Debeak the birds if feather picking or cannibalism starts. Cut off one-third of the upper beak with an electric debeaker. Do not debeak the birds unless necessary.

Vaccination

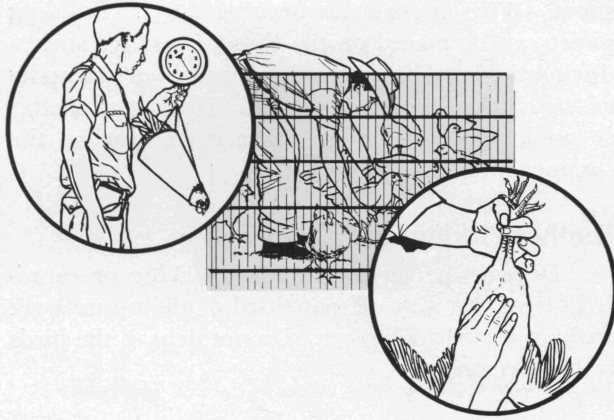
The Vaccination schedule of these birds should fit the vaccination programs of other poultry on the farm. If other poultry have not been vaccinated **DO NOT VACCINATE THE BROILER PROJECT.** If the other poultry have been vaccinated, vaccinate the broiler project for Newcastle and infectious bronchitis at 4 days and 4 weeks of age by putting the vaccine in the water. Fowl pox should be used only if a large number of mosquitoes are in the area. Follow carefully the instruction given by the vaccine manufacturer. Burn vaccine bottles and contents when vaccinations are complete. In 3 to 7 days, when the birds show signs of the vaccination taking effect, turn the heat up about 3 degrees F. to keep the birds comfortable while they have fever. Consult your county agricultural agent or adult leader concerning the vaccination program covered in L-241, *Control Poultry Losses—A Suggested Vaccination Program for Poultry.*

Parasites

Internal parasites cause poor gain and destroy the possibility of a broiler show entry. Roundworms cause the most trouble. A good sanitation program reduces this parasite problem. After each brood, remove the litter and 1/2 inch of dirt to get rid of most of the worm eggs. Keep old birds separated from the young and do not walk from the laying house to the broiler house without thoroughly cleaning shoes. Treat infected birds with a commercial wormer containing piperazine.

External parasites most likely to attack the broilers are blue bugs, lice, mites and fleas. Check the birds each week for these parasites that lower broiler quality by reducing gain and causing skin discolorations.

Consult L-256, *Texas Guide for Controlling Insects on Livestock and Poultry.*



Steps in selecting an entry of broilers for show.

Selection of Birds

The steps in selecting an entry of broilers for show follow:

(1) Two days before show, catch all birds and place them in coops or construct a temporary catch pen in the broiler house so that the birds may be easily handled.

(2) Next, weigh each bird. Eliminate all birds above or below the minimum and maximum weights set forth in the rules and regulations and return them to broiler house floor.

(3) Examine birds meeting the weight requirements for physical defects that would cause the bird to be down-graded or sifted. Some such defects are callouses or breast blisters, curved or crooked breastbone, hunched or crooked back, scratched or torn skin, bruises or blemishes, bare back or excessive pin feathers and external parasites.

Do not consider any bird that has one or more of the above defects.

Place birds that pass the above inspection in a separate coop or pen for consideration as potential show birds.

Select your entry carefully from this outstanding group of birds, considering all of the factors outlined in L-404, *How to Select Poultry for Market Qualities*, such as body conformation, fleshing, finish and uniformity.

Fitting Birds for Show

Broilers entered in a show should have clean legs, feet and feathers. This probably will not influence the overall placing of the birds, but it improves the appearance of the exhibit.

Wash the feet and legs of the birds in warm, soapy water to remove dirt.

To clean the feathers, wash the birds in warm water and mild detergent. Suds the birds by rubbing with and not against the feathers. Rinse the birds two or three times with clean, warm water. The last rinse water may contain a small amount of blueing to bring out the whiteness of the feathers. Do not use enough blueing to turn the feathers blue. Remove all detergent or the feathers will stick together. Dry the birds with a towel and place in a clean, dry coop in a warm room. Wash the birds at least 24 hours before showing.

Proper Handling and Transportation Methods

Never place more than five birds in a coop when transporting them to show. Each bird should have 1 square foot of space. Put 4 inches of litter in the coop so the birds' breasts will not bruise or become reddened from rubbing the bottom of the coop. Do not hit the birds against the coop while putting them in or taking them out. Above all, do not drop the coop.

Obey the Rules

When growing birds for show, check the rules and follow them closely. Rules are made to improve show conditions and it is the member's responsibility to comply with them.

Evaluation

Evaluate your result demonstration at the conclusion of the project. Base the evaluation on results obtained by the member. D-558, *4-H Club Poultry Meat Production Demonstration Evaluation Sheet*, should serve as a guide in evaluating your project.

D-632, *Points to Check in Producing Broilers for Show*, can be obtained from your county agricultural agent.