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# SHOW PREPARATION



## INTRODUCTION

It is important that every exhibitor learns how to prepare his poultry for showing. Poultry that are not white or light in colour are obviously less difficult to prepare. White poultry and those with white feet must be kept just that: white. This is no easy task and exhibitors of white poultry have been known to go to extraordinary lengths to keep their show stock immaculate. When white plumage is soiled and dirty, it does not look good in any show cage.

Birds with light coloured plumage (such as white, blue or buff) should be washed before they are taken to a poultry show. Birds with dark coloured plumage such as Barred Plymouth Rock chickens, Rouen ducks, and Bronze Turkeys, very seldom need to be washed unless their plumage becomes severely soiled.

To wash birds is not difficult, but it is best to practice on some birds not intended for showing. It is best to wash birds a day or two in advance before they are to be taken to the show. This will give them time to preen themselves to get their natural oils back into their feathers. Also, no bird must travel when it is wet. The bird can get sick and get soiled on the way far easier.



## WHEN TO START

Preparation should start at least 2 months before the show.

Choose a show bird of your own choice.

Remove all broken feathers as it takes approximately 8 weeks to re-grow and recover.

The beak and toe nails must be trimmed 3 days before the show.

To tame the bird, it should be taken out of the cage on a regular basis and then placed back.

Clean the birds a day or two before the show.

## HOW TO REMOVE A BIRD FROM ITS CAGE



With the bird facing you, place one hand under the bird's carriage. Put your middle finger in-between its legs and with your other fingers, firmly hold both legs.

Place your other hand on its back and lift it off the floor.

Take it out carefully, head first.

Using both hands, returned the bird to its cage, head first.

## GROOMING OF BIRDS



- Equipment needed:
- *Plastic bucket,*
- *Three tubs,*
- *Hand towel,*
- *Nail brush with soft and harder side or soft old toothbrush,*
- *Toothpicks,*
- *Soap,*
- *Shampoo,*
- *Bluing cubs (Afrikaans: blousel),*
- *White vinegar,*
- *Alcohol,*
- *Glycerin,*
- *Olive oil,*
- *Sponge,*
- *Hairdryer,*
- *Nail file and*
- *Dog nail trimmer.*

### Step 1:



Pour cold water in a plastic bucket.

- *First remove the excess dirt off the bird, especially the feet. Use a soft sided nailbrush to brush the comb, ear-lobes and wattles of the bird, using clean cold water in a plastic bucket.*

### Step 2:



Pour warm water (about 35°C) in the three tubs:

The first tub is used for actual cleaning of the birds.

Add a little bit of soap powder in the first tub. Choose your soap powder carefully; some might be too harsh for a chicken's skin. For a white bird, also add half of a bluing cube to the water.

- *Grasp the bird with both hands and lower it gently into the water, holding the wings so that the bird cannot flap them.*
- *With the bird standing on the bottom of the tub, release one hand but hold the bird firmly with the other.*
- *With the free hand, gently move the feathers on all parts of the body so the soap and water will penetrate to the skin. Then with a small brush, sponge, or your hand work the soapy water through the feathers*
- *Make sure to rub the feathers from base to tip to prevent feather breakage.*
- *Sponge the worst dirt off the feathers, particularly under the tail.*
- *Make sure that you follow the grain of the rest of the feathers when sponging.*
- *Do not immerse the head of the bird under the water. No water must enter the bird's mouth or nose.*
- *Be careful not to let any soap in the eyes.*
- *While the bird is still in the first tub, take a soft, old toothbrush or a nailbrush and scrub the legs gently to remove any dirt or molting scales, preferably from the top down to its toes.*
- *The bluing helps whiten, condition, and give the feathers a sheen.*
- *A recognized pesticide can be added to the wash water to help get rid of any external parasites.*

**Step 3:**



Use clean water in the **second** tub.

- *Rinse the bird thoroughly to ensure that all the soap has been rinsed off the feathers.*

**Step 4:**



Add white vinegar to the clean water in the **3<sup>rd</sup>** tub.

- *When the plumage has been thoroughly rinsed in the second tub, transfer the birds to the third tub containing a small amount of vinegar and thoroughly rinse out as much of the soap as possible.*
- *The vinegar will help remove the soap; otherwise the feathers will stick and be streaked.*
- *Press the excess water out of the feathers, wrap the bird in a towel, and gently towel off the excess water by pressing again or toweling with the grain of the feathers.*

**Step 5:**



#### Blow drying:

- *First blow-dry under the wings, keeping to the grain of the feathers (root to the tip). Continue blow-drying until the bird is dry. Prevent holding the hairdryer too close to the bird when blow-drying; you don't want to singe the feathers or burn the bird.*
- *The birds should be placed in a clean dry cage in a warm room.*
- *Birds cannot stand excessive heat, so do not place them too close to the heat source.*
- *Take care that the birds do not soil their plumage during the drying process.*
- *If two or more birds have been washed, keep them separated until dry.*
- *A bird can be washed in 15 to 20 minutes, but it can take 12 to 18 hours to dry. Give them time to preen their feathers again.*

#### Step 6:

##### After washing:

- *After the bird has been washed and dried, examine it to make sure no dirt remains under the scales. If some is found, it should be removed with a toothpick.*
- *A small piece of cloth moistened with baby oil, Vitamin E oil, or olive oil should be rubbed over the comb, wattles, beak and shanks of the birds.*
- *A mixture of equal parts of alcohol, glycerin, and olive oil makes an excellent cleaning and polishing solution for shanks, feet, comb and wattles. Do not apply too much as the plumage may become stained. Buff the head and leg parts with a clean, soft rag until all the oil has been worked in, taking great care not to get oil on any feathers.*
- *Check toenails and beak to see if any need trimming. If the toenails need trimming, use dog nail trimmers and then file lightly, with a nail file, to round off edges after.*
- *Use a toothpick to clean around the bird's nostrils. Since a bird that spends much of its time caged can't keep its beak properly trimmed by scraping it on the ground, trim back the upper beak if necessary. A pair of nail clippers and a nail file will work for this.*