

MINI 4-H

POULTRY



EXHIBIT REQUIREMENTS

Read this booklet carefully.

Care for a chicken at your home.

Exhibit a 14x22 inch poster about chickens at the county fair.

**Purdue University, Indiana Counties and U.S. Department of Agriculture Cooperating
An Affirmative Action/Equal Opportunity Institution**

MINI 4-H POULTRY

Welcome to the Mini 4-H Poultry project. Your requirements are: read this booklet carefully, care for a chicken at your home and then exhibit a 14x22 inch poster about chickens at the county fair.

INTRODUCTION

Poultry can be defined as large birds which were domesticated centuries ago and are now raised for food in the form of eggs and meat. The best examples are chickens, turkeys, ducks, and geese. Other birds that are classified as poultry, although they are raised mostly as ornamental birds, include the guinea fowl, pea fowl, swans, and pigeons.

The chicken and the goose were domesticated over 3000 years ago. In terms of sheer numbers raised for food, the chicken is the main kind of poultry. It is said to have originated in Southwest Asia from one or more of the jungle fowl species which still inhabit that region. The one species of poultry which is thought to be native to the North American continent is the turkey.

Today there are more than 225 breeds and varieties of chickens, turkeys, and ducks. Most of these are raised for show or exhibition. Only a few are of importance in the commercial production of meat and eggs.

Poultry differs markedly from other domestic farm animals. Some of the differences are easily recognized. They have feathers instead of wool or hair, walk on two instead of four legs, fly if necessary, and lay eggs, to name a few. Other differences are not as apparent. For example, poultry feed is very finely ground, partly because poultry have no teeth. Nature provided them with a gizzard in the digestive tract. The gizzard has a tough lining and thick muscles which, along with bits of rocks and stones which collect therein, grind large particles of food into smaller ones.

The young of poultry develop outside of the body of the hen. A hen does not have to wait for the young to be born before she can lay another egg. She can and often does lay an egg every day. She used to store these eggs in a nest until a convenient nest full had been laid. She then stopped laying, became "broody," and went to work hatching her chicks. The production of many eggs per hen per year has given rise to the table-egg industry. The development of the embryo outside the body of the hen has given rise to the incubator and the hatchery industry.

Poultry behave differently from other farm animals. They naturally flock together. They are timid and shy and will run when approached by a person. They are easily "spooked", and chickens and turkeys will pile up in the corner of a pen when frightened, causing the birds on the bottom of the pile to die in a very few minutes.

Poultry flocks have a very strict social order commonly called the "pecking order." The top hen in the pecking order will peck and boss all other hens in the flock. The next hen, although bossed and pecked by the top hen, can boss and peck all those beneath her in the pecking order, and so on down the order to the bottom hen, which bosses no one but is pecked by all others. Roosters in a flock establish a similar pecking order entirely independent of the hens.

The pecking order is established by fights between pairs of hens. Each hen challenges or fights every other hen. Any hen may challenge any other at any time. When this happens, the two hens may fight it out to see who is boss. A well-defined social order seems to contribute to the well-being and stability of the flock. Although people may object to the severity with which poultry discipline each other, or feel sorry for the low bird in the pecking order, our efforts to thwart or skirt this social order by all sorts of management gimmicks probably contribute little to the total good of the flock.

OTHER POULTRY FACTS

Chickens, turkeys, ducks and geese are all called **poultry**. These birds have similar characteristics, such as wings, feathers, feet and limited flying abilities.

Chickens - There are many different breeds of chickens which vary in size, shape and color. Female chickens are called **hens**. Male chickens are called **roosters**. The young are called **chicks**. A group of chickens is called a **flock**.

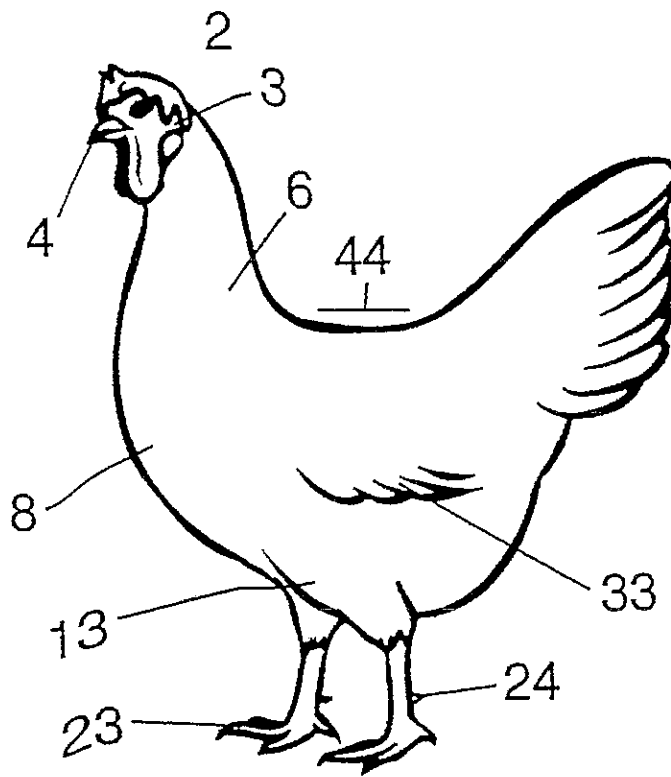
Most chickens lay one egg a day. Eggs can be **incubated** by the hen sitting on the **nest** and keeping the eggs warm.

Commercial electric incubators are used for **hatching** large numbers of eggs. It takes about 21 days before the chicks will hatch. Chicken eggs are the most commonly eaten egg in the United States. Eggs are a rich source of protein, iron and phosphorus. Most chickens are raised in large **confinement buildings** where they are often automatically fed and watered daily. The eggs are often automatically collected by using a **conveyor system**.

Turkeys - A female turkey is called a **hen**, a male is called a **tom** and the young are called **poults**. A group of turkeys is called a **flock**.

A turkey hen will **lay** between 8 to 15 eggs or more before she begins to sit on a nest which holds the eggs. They are kept warm for 28-30 days before the first **poult** is hatched. Turkeys are very large birds that may weigh up to 25 pounds or more when fully grown. Domestic turkeys have been bred to provide a large amount of white breast meat. They are usually raised on large turkey **confinement farms** where a well-balanced diet is provided for the.

Turkey, a traditional holiday favorite, is also found in the grocery meat case as turkey ham, turkey bologna, turkey hot dogs and turkey lunch meat.



Try to name the parts of the chicken. If you need some help or want to check your answers, the correct responses are in the back of this sheet!

- 2. _____
- 3. _____
- 4. _____
- 6. _____
- 8. _____
- 13. _____
- 23. _____
- 24. _____
- 33. _____
- 44. _____

Parts of a Chicken

2. Comb
3. Ear
4. Beak
6. Neck
8. Breast
13. Thigh
23. Toe
24. Spur
33. Wing
44. Back

MINI 4-H POULTRY RECORD SHEET

NAME _____ GRADE _____

ADDRESS _____ ZIP CODE _____

TELEPHONE _____

INFORMATION ABOUT YOUR POULTRY

NAME OF ANIMAL _____

ANIMAL'S AGE _____ SEX _____

OWNER'S NAME _____

I HAVE REVIEWED THIS RECORD AND BELIEVE IT TO BE CORRECT.

SIGNATURE OF PARENT _____

DATE _____