

Poultry Handbook

Judging Past Egg Production Hens

Handling Qualities

Production hens should be judged for handling qualities and abdominal capacity if they cannot be placed by pigmentation. To do this you must gently catch, hold and examine the hens.

Handling Qualities refers to the condition of the pubic bones and abdomen.

- T** Good: Thin and pliable pubic bones, lean skin and soft abdomen
T Poor: Thick pubic bones, thick skin, hard abdomen (means fat in the abdomen)

Handling Qualities is the second characteristic that should be used to place the class.

Catching & Handling the Hen

After seeing the class as a whole, remove each bird from her cage and make notes of your observations. To remove the bird from the cage and examine her, follow these steps:

1. Place your hand above the hen and gently pin her to the floor of the coop. Steady the bird with your free hand and hold one wing at the shoulder. Turn her head to the door.
2. With both hands, hold the wings next to the body; lift the bird off the floor and take her from the cage head first.
3. Slide one hand under the bird so the breast sets in the palm of your hand. Steady her with your free hand. Hold the legs gently above the hocks. Put your index finger between the hocks, your thumb around one leg and your remaining fingers around the other leg. Carry the weight of the bird with the breast in the palm of your hand.
4. To examine the bird, hold her back against your stomach, head down. From this position you can see the vent and check handling quality, abdominal capacity, bleaching of the feet and shanks and molt.

Handling Quality

- < Keep the bird in the same position and gently feel the pubic bones for sharpness and flexibility.
- < Take a pinch of skin just below the pubic bone. Roll it gently between the thumb and finger to feel its thinness. Feel the softness or hardness of the abdomen.
 - < Softness means a lack of fat.
 - < Hardness means fat in the abdomen.
- < A lean, trim condition of the pubic bones, skin, abdomen and shanks means good handling quality. Record this in your notes.

Bleaching of Vent



Use your free hand to spread the feathers and look at the vent. It should be bleached, moist, large and oblong in shape. Record your observations about the vent in your notes.

Bleaching of Shanks

Look at the feet and shanks. They should be bleached through the hocks. Also, they should be thin and have a groove down the side.

