

## Egg Shows – Tips for Organisers & Exhibitors

*By Clayton Botkin*

Many fairs and local poultry shows now offer the opportunity for the public and their members to show eggs. The American Poultry Association, the governing body for poultry shows in North America, has recently provided some guidelines for egg shows which can be found on their website. With so many unique poultry breeds and varieties becoming more common at shows, it is of little surprise there is a renewed interest in egg shows to be held in conjunction with purebred poultry shows.

It would be remiss for show organisers to ignore the potential of including an egg show. Egg shows are relatively easy to setup, require materials that are readily available, and do not require further submission of reporting or results. In addition, the potential for showing eggs is a great way to invite new exhibitors into the showroom to compete with something other than live birds, which will hopefully be their next step in the foray of poultry.

Below are some guiding tips for those interested in showing eggs and show organisers. This list is not meant to be exhaustive and is in no particular order. It is intended to provide a background and contribute to making these events successful.

- Select the appropriate classes you wish to enter. Enter the appropriate number of eggs for the class you signed up for. The number of eggs and limits on number of entries in each class will be outlined in the show rules. **Be sure to read all of the show rules before submitting your entry.**
- Ensure your egg entries are in place at the appropriate time for judging. Follow the show rules for entering and removing your eggs. Be aware that removing entries from most shows prior to the published release date will likely result in your prize money being forfeited.
- Make sure all the eggs fit within the prescribed size and colour class. Many fairs or shows refer to commercial grading standards. These are set by regulations in Canada and can be found on the Canadian Food Inspection Agency's website. If you're unsure on the classes offered by your fair, check the fair book thoroughly or contact the coordinator for clarification. Canada defines classes of eggs by their weights among other specifications. These classes should be common for where you are but be sure to check with the show coordinators if you are unsure.
  - Classes should be defined as follows within the divisions (divisions may be defined by species and colour). The classes below are provided by Canada's Shell Egg Grading Act.
    - Peewee – Less than 42 g
    - Small – 42 g to 49 g
    - Medium – 49 g to 56 g
    - Large – 56 g to 63 g
    - Extra Large – 63 g to 70 g
    - Jumbo – above 70 g
- Eggs are generally judged on freshness (structure), shell colour, yolk colour and consistency. Structure and freshness are usually determined by the judge through either candling or cracking one egg onto a plate, or both. The consistency and structure of the opened egg lets the judge know how fresh it is. This also gives them a chance to assess yolk colour and shell strength. Judges will be looking for the most fresh eggs. Generally, only one egg from an entry will be opened, so it is in the best interest of the exhibitor to ensure that every egg in the entry is as fresh as possible.

- Always store eggs pointed end down in the carton. This will help to maintain freshness and structure within the egg. Placing eggs inverted (pointed end up) in cartons to be judged can send a message to the judge that there's a lack of awareness about egg storage and could affect your placing.
- Keep your eggs in the fridge. Eggs should be collected every day and stored under the appropriate conditions. This will also contribute to preserving freshness. Entering old eggs is not recommended as they can be very easy to spot. Local health authorities have good information on how to safely preserve and store eggs for keeping freshness and reducing contamination.
- When selecting your eggs, you should be looking for a group of eggs as identical to one another as possible. Eggs are judged collectively and should all be as close to each other as possible in size, shape and colour.
- Judges will assess the opened egg for yolk colour. They will generally be looking for a rich, coloured yolk to indicate nutritional content. Yolk colour that is pale will likely be less favored when placed against an entry of equal structure, size and shell colour. Yolk colour can be greatly influenced by the feed available to hens. Speak with your local feed suppliers to ensure you are feeding an optimal diet to have the best quality eggs.
- Candle your eggs. Remove any eggs with visible cracks, deformities on the shell or visible within the egg. Unless it is a class, do not enter double yolk eggs. Cracked eggs, or eggs with deformities, marks or pigmentation deposits that are inconsistent within the entry should not be shown. Be sure your entry demonstrates an exemplary representation of the products from your flock and farm.
- **Do not take your eggs home after the show!** This is particularly important during summer fairs, when most eggs are displayed in the open, over the course of warm summer days and readily available to the public for touching and handling. There is a significant food safety risk in doing so, as well as the potential for a biosecurity risk if you bring them back near your flock or coop. Follow appropriate disposal guidelines and destroy the egg entries if they are not already destroyed by the fair or host organisation.
- Most fairs will offer class awards, or placings within the classes, as well as division champions (best and reserve of white, brown, coloured, duck, goose, turkey, or other species), best egg entry and reserve, and best and reserve egg entries by juniors.

Egg shows can be a fun and easy way to engage new and seasoned exhibitors in poultry shows. Summer fairs and spring shows are a great time to show eggs as hens are usually producing well and in good laying condition. Often, spring pullets are entering production in time for fall shows as well. Offering an egg show is a great way to bring people into the exhibition and purebred poultry world, it also offers organizers a flexible way to highlight the productive fruits of our labour and profile why poultry were domesticated thousands of years ago!