

# Judging Live Birds



Created by Connie Page  
Emanuel County Extension Agent  
P.O. Box 770  
129 N. Anderson Drive  
Swainsboro, GA 30401  
478-237-1226 FAX 478-237-8451  
conniep@uga.edu  
April, 2006

# Judging Live Birds

## Judged on past egg production

**Persistency** Longest period of production

Pigment Loss = amount of yellow coloring

Molt = replacement of feathers

**Intenstity** Current rate of production

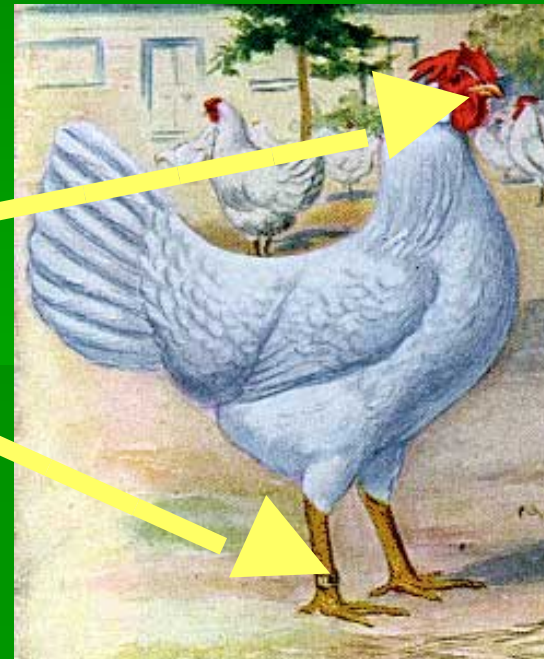
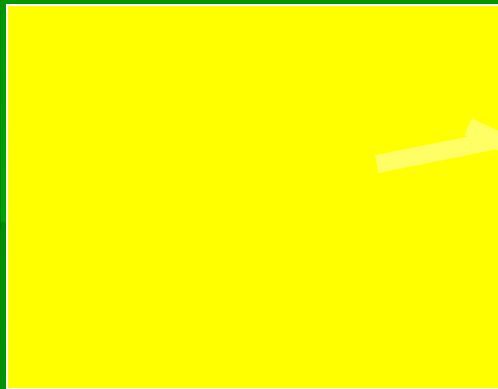
Handling Qualities – softness and pliability of abdomen

Abdominal Capacity – width and depth of abdomen

**Health and Vigor** - shape and brightness of the eye, proportional shape of the head and the condition of the comb and wattles

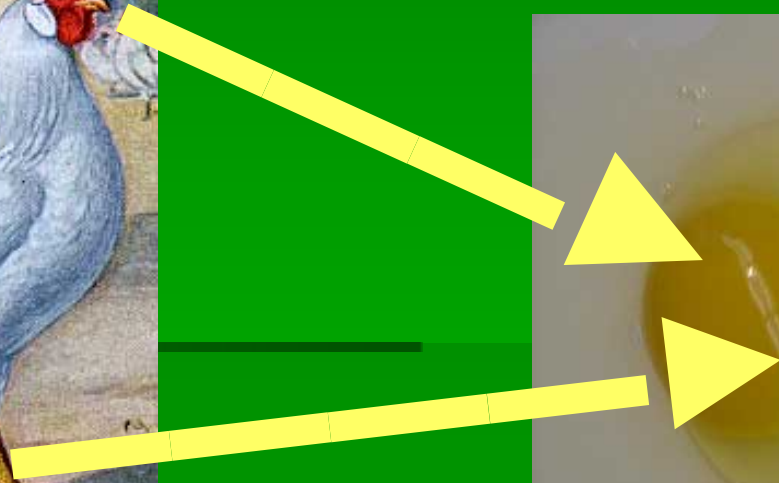
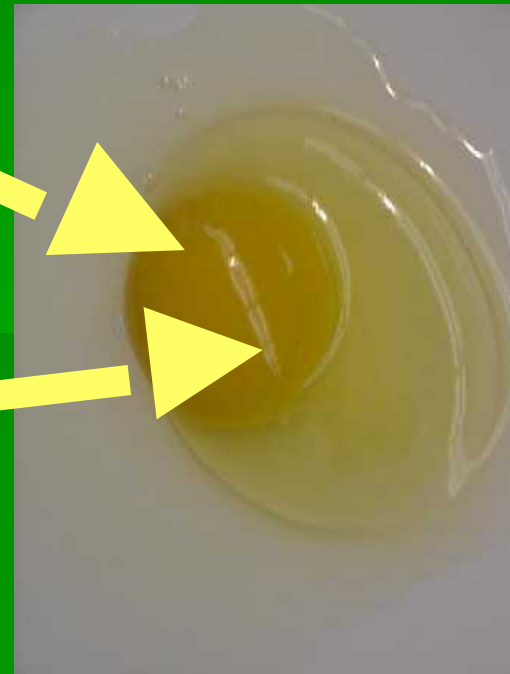
# Judging Live Birds - Pigment

Yellow pigment, xanthophyll, is put into skin, beak, shanks, and feet while bird is a growing pullet.

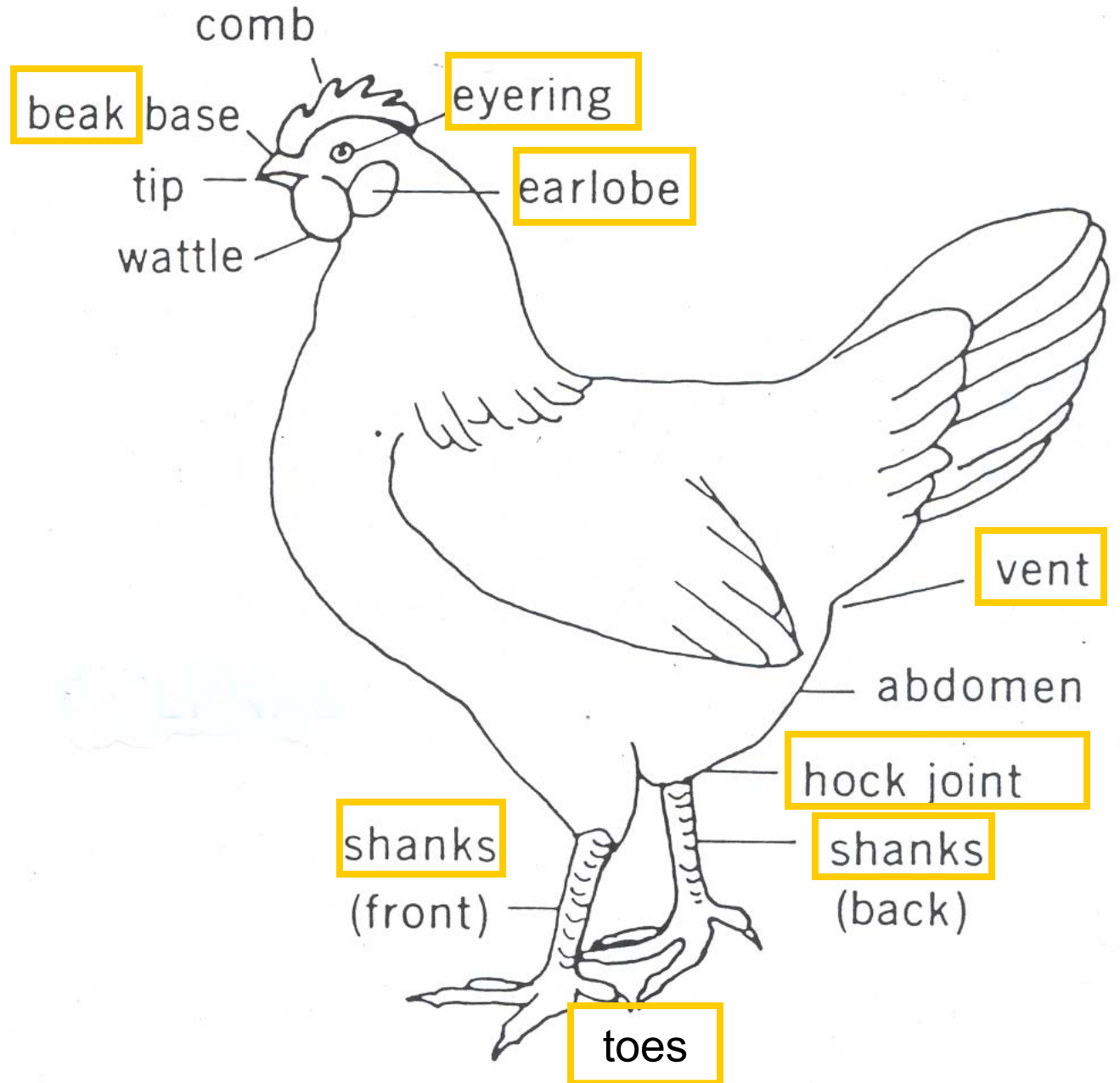


# Judging Live Birds - Pigment

At 16-22 weeks, the hen begins laying eggs. Bleaching is the loss of yellow pigment from the hen's body. The yellow color goes into the egg.



# Parts of the Hen





# Live Birds – Bleaching

- The pigment leaves in order:

Vent

Eyering

Earlobe

Beak (base to tip)

Shanks

Top of Feet & Toes

# Live Birds – Bleaching

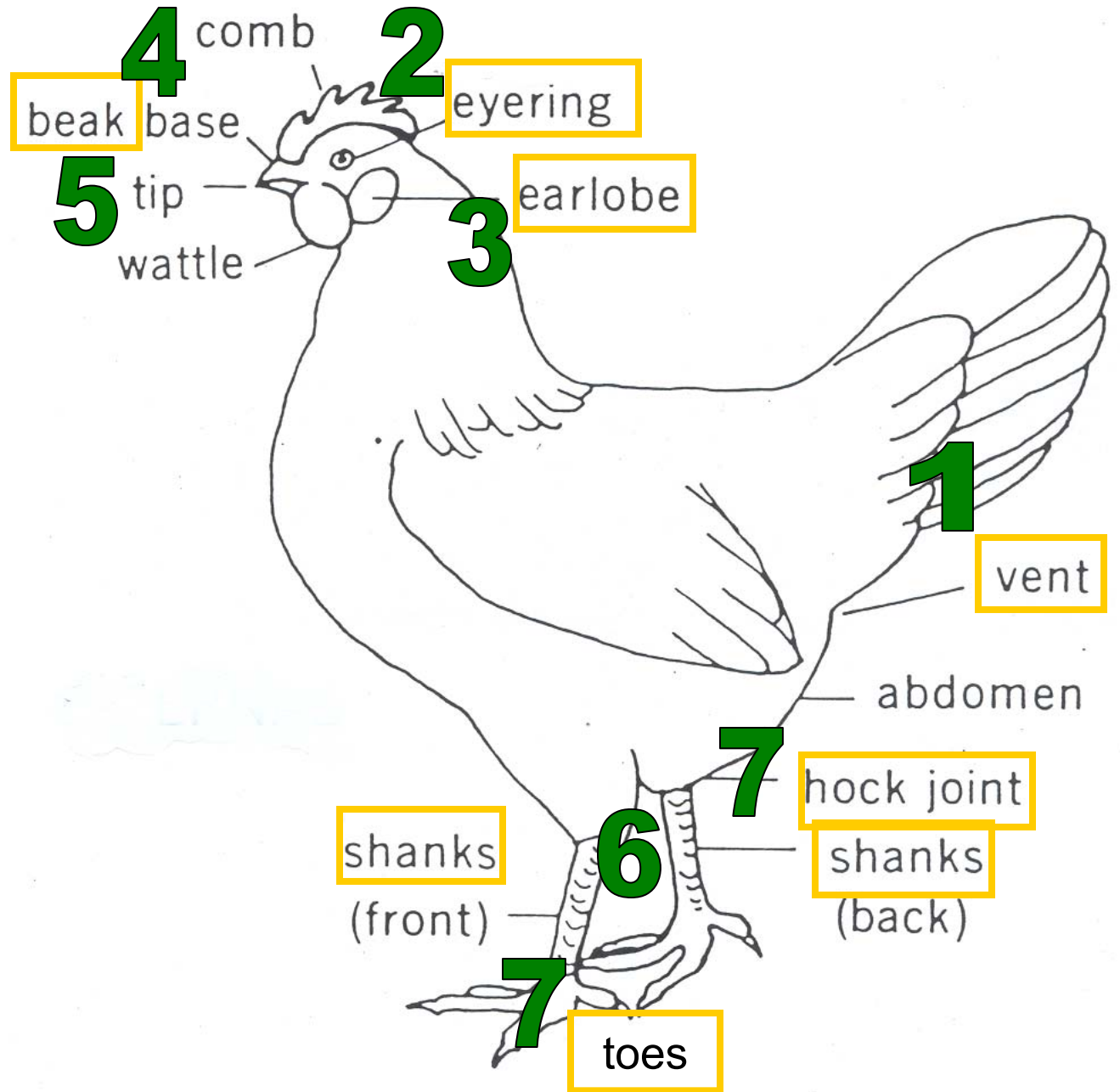
---

**mnemonic = memory device**

**v**ery **e**arly **e**veryone **b**ut **s**usie **t**alked

**v**ent, **e**yering, **e**arlobe, **b**eak, **s**hanks, **t**oes

# Parts of the Hen





# Live Birds - Egg Production

- You can estimate the number of eggs laid from the bleaching:

Vent = 10 eggs

Eyering = 8-12 eggs

Earlobe = 10-15 eggs

Beak (base) = 25 eggs

Beak (tip) = 35 eggs

Shanks = 100-160 eggs

Top of Feet & Toes = 180 eggs

# Live Birds - Vent

Should be bleached, moist, oblong in shape



**Good Layer**



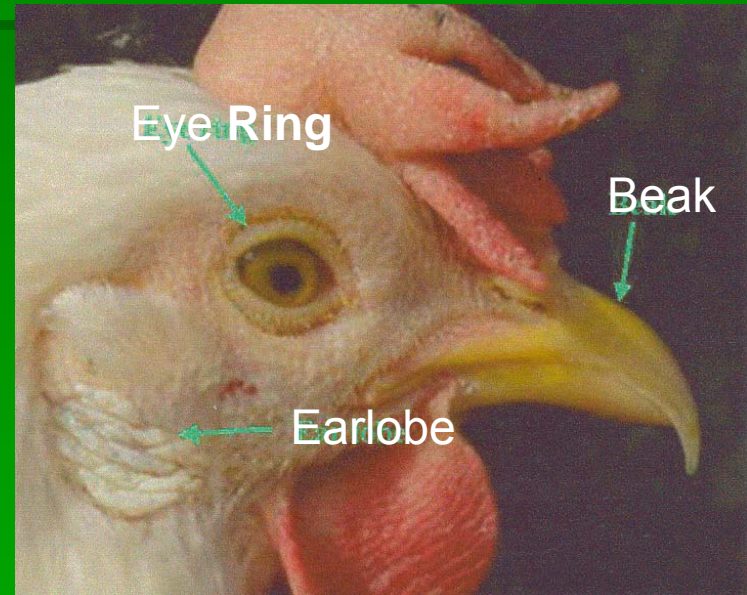
**Poor Layer**



# Live Birds - Head



**Good Layer**

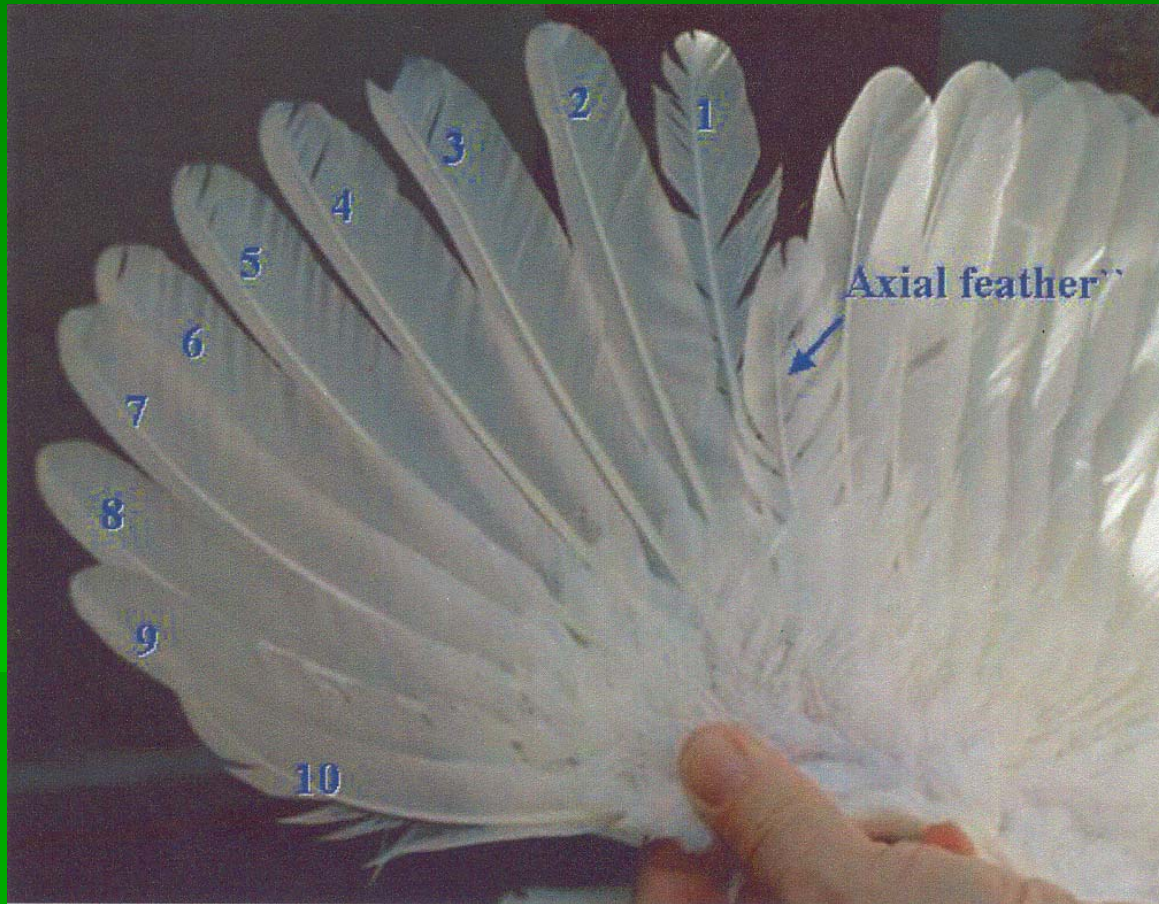


**Poor Layer**

# Live Birds - Molt

- Molt = lose and replace feathers
- Axial feather = short feather between primary and secondary feathers
- Birds have 10 primary feathers, outside of axial feather toward wing tip
- Birds have 14 secondary feathers from axial feather toward hen's body
- Birds lose and replace both primary feathers and secondary feathers. Concentrate on primary feathers.
- It takes 12 weeks to complete a molt.

# Live Birds - Molt

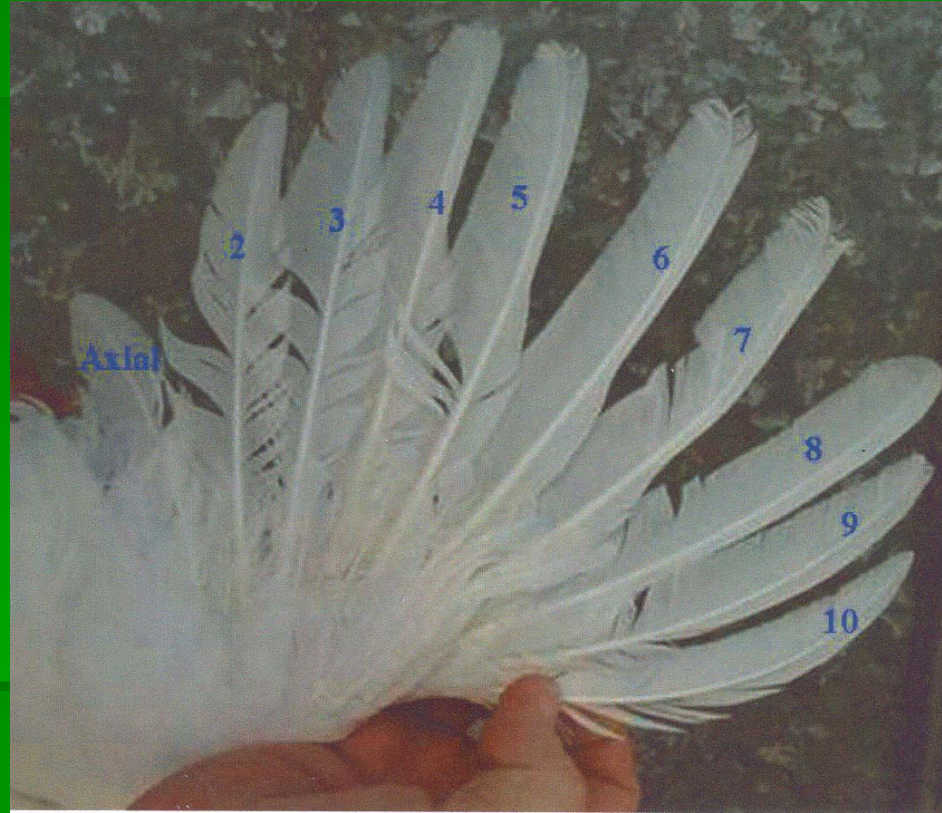


**Birds molt from  
axial feather to  
wing tip.**

**To check for molt,  
spread out  
wing feathers.**



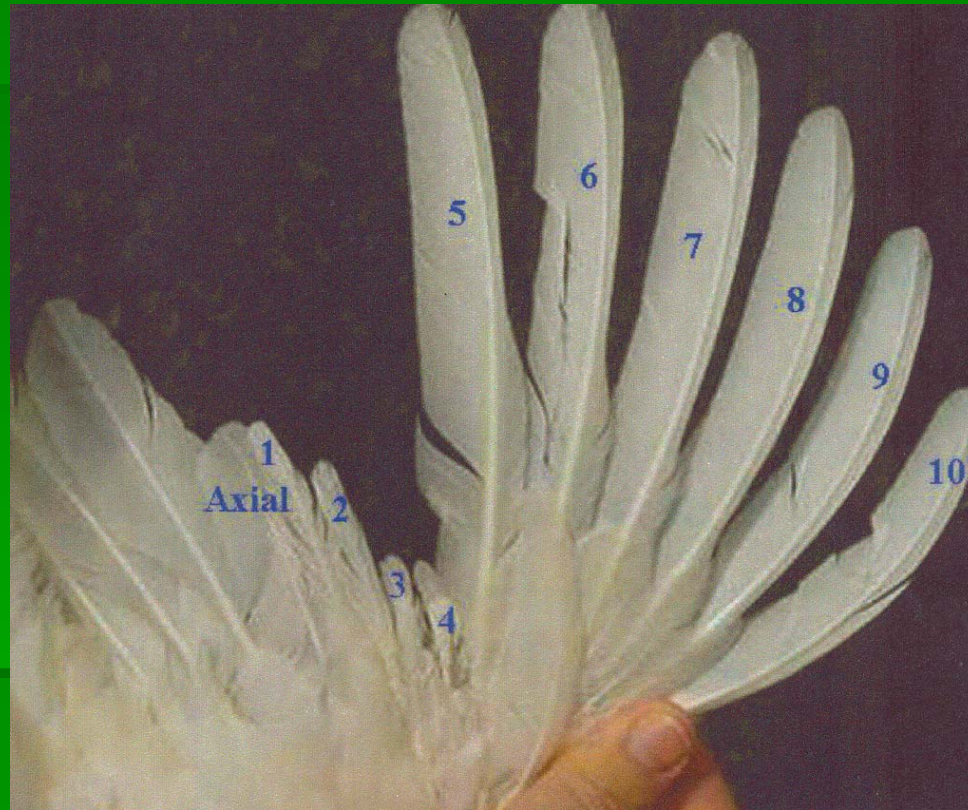
# Live Birds - Molt



**One Feather Molt**



# Live Birds - Molt



**Four Feather Molt**

# Live Birds – Regaining Color

- Pigment (color) returns in the same order that it left.
- Always check vent and head for signs of returning color.
- Hens that have yellow pigment in the vent and head are poor layers.

# Live Birds – Close Pigment

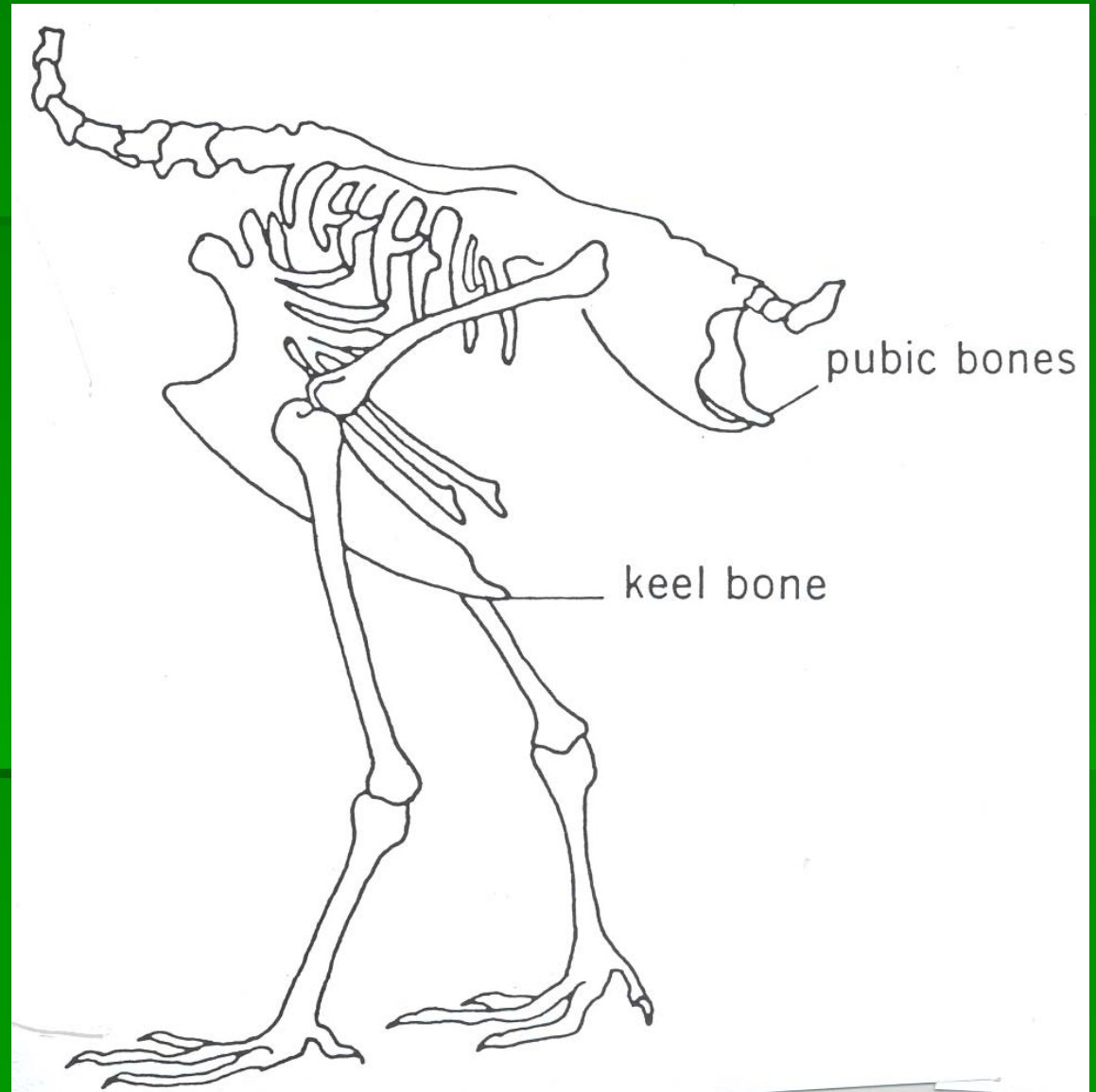
---

- If hens have similar bleaching then consider:

## Handling Qualities

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

# Skeleton of the Hen



# Live Birds - Handling Qualities

---



***Good:*** Thin and pliable pubic bones, lean skin and soft abdomen



***Poor:*** Thick pubic bones, thick skin, hard abdomen (means fat in the abdomen)

# Live Birds - Checking Handling Qualities

---

- Gently feel the pubic bones for sharpness and flexibility.
  - Take a pinch of skin just below the pubic bone.
  - Roll this skin gently between your thumb and finger to feel its thinness.
- 
- Feel the softness or hardness of the abdomen:
    - Softness means a lack of fat (and a good layer)
    - Hardness means the presence of fat (and a poorer layer)



# Live Birds - Practice

## Handling Qualities

### Thickness of Pubic Bones

The bird on the left has thinner pubic bones indicating higher handling qualities.



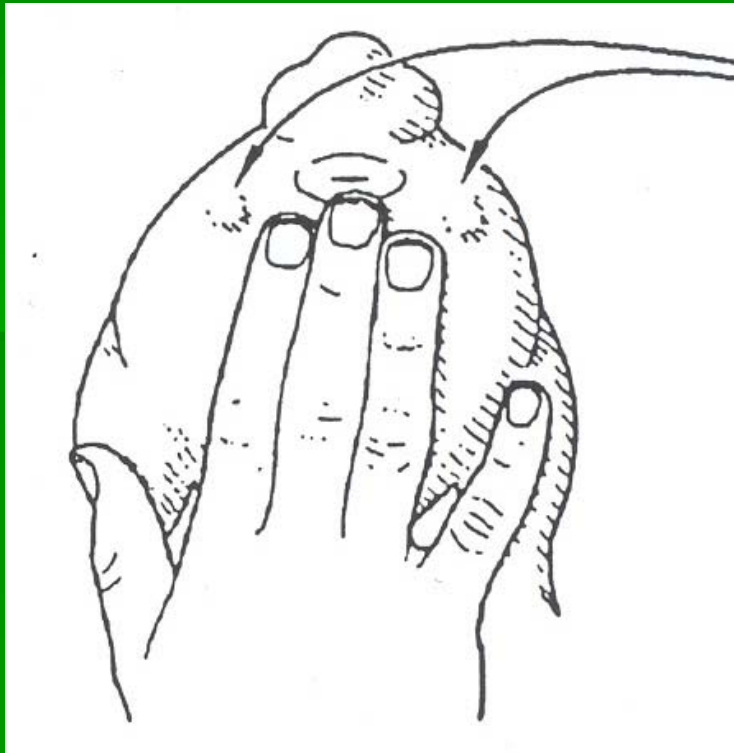
### Thinness of Skin

The bird on the left has thinner skin indicating better handling qualities.



# Live Birds – Abdominal Capacity

- Use your fingers to check distance between pubic bones = width



## Pubic Bones

This hen has a  
three-finger spread  
between pubic bones.

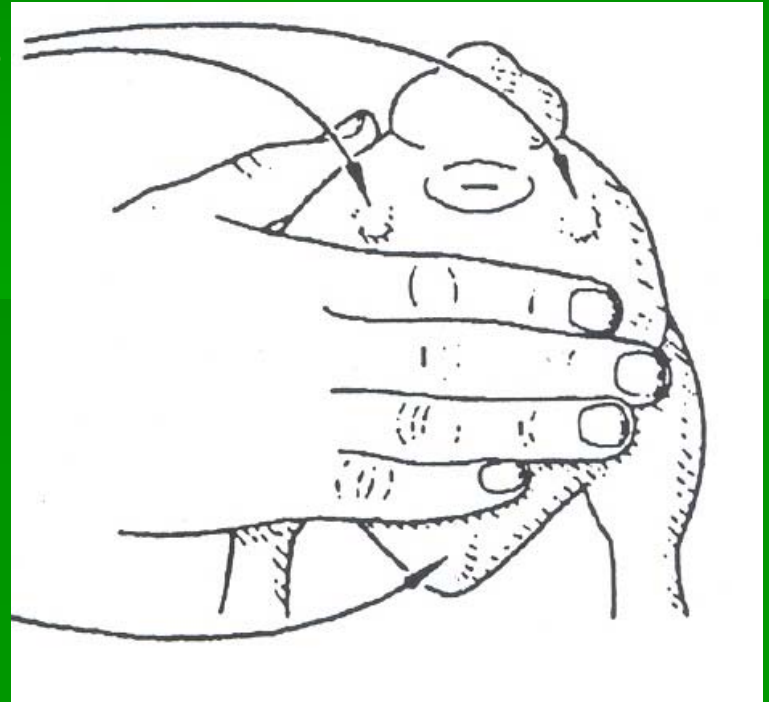
# Live Birds - Abdominal Capacity

- Use your fingers to check distance between pubic bones and keel bone = depth.

## Pubic Bones

This hen has a  
four-finger spread  
between pubic bones  
and keel bone.

## Keel Bone

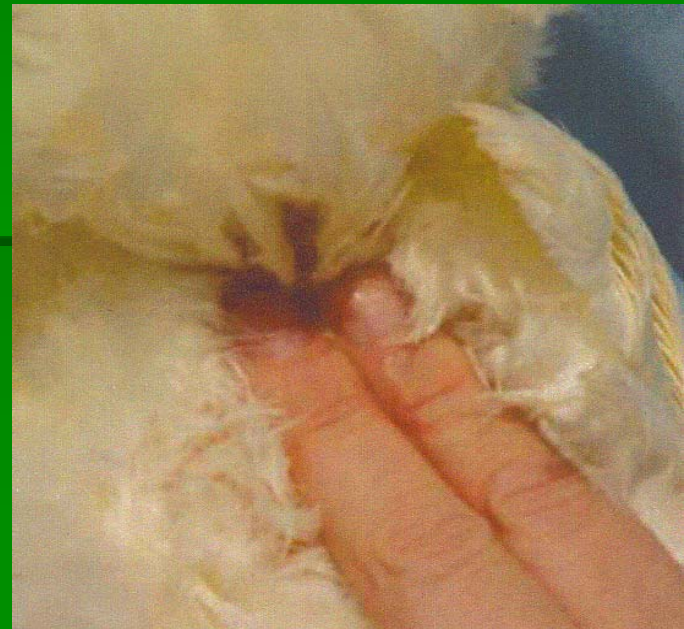


# Live Birds – Abdominal Capacity

Comparison of **Width** = Space between **pubic bones**



3-finger = Excellent Layer



2-finger = Fair Layer



# Live Birds - Abdominal Capacity

Comparison of **Depth** = Space between **pubic bones and keel**



4-finger = Excellent Layer



3-finger = Fair Layer

# Live Birds – Health & Vigor

- Head – Broad; Somewhat flat on top; Wide between eyes
- Face – Clean-cut; Smooth; Wrinkle-free
- Comb – Bright red; Smooth; Waxy
- Eyes – Large and bright; Reddish color; Round pupils



# Live Birds - Health & Vigor



**Excellent**

**Fair**

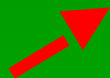
**Poor**

# Live Bird – Placing Class

Rank the birds in order from the best layer to the poorest layer

Find your placing and mark your card

All the placings that begin with number one.



CLASS A – LIVE BIRDS	
Contestant's Number _____	
1234	3124
1243	3142
1324	3214
1342	3241
1423	3412
1432	3421
2134	4123
2143	4132
2314	4213
2341	4231
2413	4312
2431	4321
Score _____	

# Live Bird – Placing Class

Rank the birds in order from the best layer to the poorest layer

Find your placing and mark your card

All the placings that begin with number two.

**CLASS A – LIVE BIRDS**

Contestant's Number \_\_\_\_\_

1234	3124
1243	3142
1324	3214
1342	3241
1423	3412
1432	3421
2134	4123
2143	4132
2314	4213
2341	4231
2413	4312
2431	4321

Score \_\_\_\_\_

# Live Bird – Placing Class

Rank the birds in order from the best layer to the poorest layer

Find your placing and mark your card

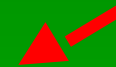
**CLASS A – LIVE BIRDS**

Contestant's Number \_\_\_\_\_

1234	3124
1243	3142
1324	3214
1342	3241
1423	3412
1432	3421
2134	4123
2143	4132
2314	4213
2341	4231
2413	4312
2431	4321

Score \_\_\_\_\_

All the placings that begin with number three.



# Live Bird – Placing Class

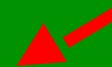
Rank the birds in order from the best layer to the poorest layer

Find your placing and mark your card

CLASS A – LIVE BIRDS	
Contestant's Number _____	_____
1234	3124
1243	3142
1324	3214
1342	3241
1423	3412
1432	3421
2134	4123
2143	4132
2314	4213
2341	4231
2413	4312
2431	4321





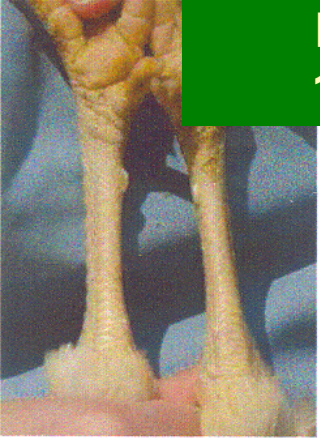



Score \_\_\_\_\_

All the placings that begin with number four.





# Live Birds - Practice

CAGE 1	CAGE 2	CAGE 3	CAGE 4
 <p data-bbox="305 715 749 961"><b>Bird # 2 has more Pigment than Bird # 1 1 over 2</b></p>		<p data-bbox="981 365 1379 554"><b>Bird # 3 is most Bleached TOP BIRD</b></p> 	 <p data-bbox="1416 761 1808 949"><b>Bird # 4 is least Bleached BOTTOM BIRD</b></p>
			



# Live Birds - Practice

- Bird #3 is an easy top. She is the most bleached in the class.
- Bird #4 is an easy bottom. She is the most yellow bird in the class.
- Bird #1 and bird #2 are close. But if you look carefully, #1 is more bleached (less yellow) than #2.

Placing: **3 - 1 - 2 - 4**

# Live Bird – Placing Class

Rank the birds in order from the best layer to the poorest layer

Find your placing and mark your card

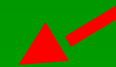
**CLASS A – LIVE BIRDS**

Contestant's Number \_\_\_\_\_

1234	3124
1243	3142
1324	3214
1342	3241
1423	3412
1432	3421
2134	4123
2143	4132
2314	4213
2341	4231
2413	4312
2431	4321

Score \_\_\_\_\_

All the placings that begin with number three.



# Live Bird – Placing Class

Rank the birds in order from the best layer to the poorest layer



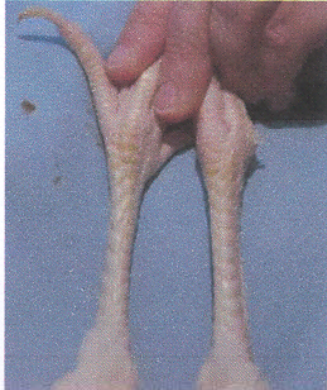

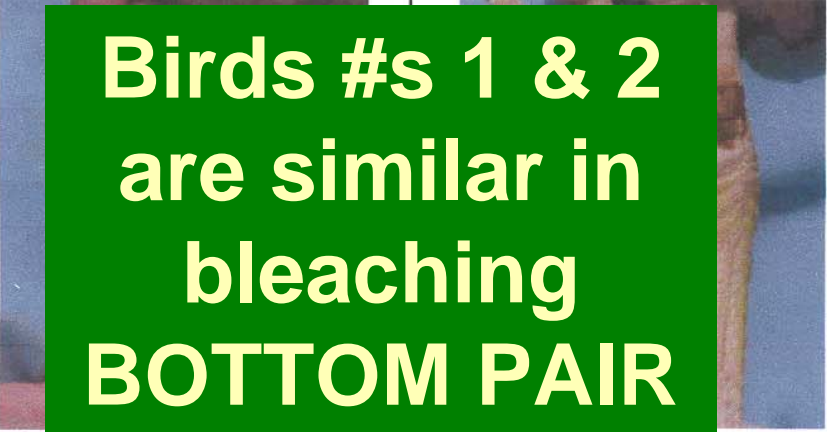

Find your placing and mark your card

CLASS A – LIVE BIRDS	
Contestant's Number _____	_____
1234	X 3124
1243	3142
1324	3214
1342	3241
1423	3412
1432	3421
2134	4123
2143	4132
2314	4213
2341	4231
2413	4312
2431	4321

Score \_\_\_\_\_

Be sure your "X" fits inside the lines beside the placing you choose

# Live Birds - Practice

CAGE 1	CAGE 2	CAGE 3	CAGE 4
			
 <p data-bbox="144 796 931 1216"><b>Birds #s 1 &amp; 2 are similar in bleaching BOTTOM PAIR</b></p>		 <p data-bbox="1020 796 1767 1216"><b>Birds #s 3 &amp; 4 are similar in bleaching TOP PAIR</b></p>	

# Live Birds - Practice

## Comparison of Handling Qualities

**Bird 3**



**Thickness of Pubic Bones**



**Thinness of Skin**

**Bird 4**





# Live Birds - Practice

The class can be placed on pigmentation.

Two birds (# 3 & #4) are more bleached, and have less pigment. 3 has better handling qualities. The top pair is 3 over 4.

Two birds (#1 & #2) are less bleached, and have more pigment. 2 is more yellow than 1. In the bottom pair 1 goes over 2.

**Placing : 3 – 4 – 1 – 2**

# Live Bird – Placing Class

Rank the birds in order from the best layer to the poorest layer

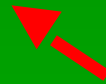
Find your placing and mark your card

**CLASS A – LIVE BIRDS**

Contestant's Number \_\_\_\_\_

1234	3124
1243	3142
1324	3214
1342	3241
1423	3412
1432	3421
2134	4123
2143	4132
2314	4213
2341	4231
2413	4312
2431	4321

Score \_\_\_\_\_



All the placings that begin with number three.

# Live Bird – Placing Class

Rank the birds in order from the best layer to the poorest layer

Find your placing and mark your card

CLASS A – LIVE BIRDS	
Contestant's Number	
1234	3124
1243	3142
1324	3214
1342	3241
1423	X 3412
1432	3421
2134	4123
2143	4132
2314	4213
2341	4231
2413	4312
2431	4321

Score \_\_\_\_\_

Be sure your "X" fits inside the lines beside the placing you choose

# Live Birds - Reasons

---

- You will give one set of reasons at the Area Contest on Class B – Live Birds.
- At the State Contest there will be two sets of Oral Reasons.
- Reasons for your placing are given in front of an adult judge.
- Sound convincing, confident, and sure of yourself.

# Live Birds - Taking Notes

Take notes on the class for which you will  
give oral reasons

TABLE FOR TAKING NOTES

<b>BIRD #</b>	<b>PIGMENTATION</b>	<b>HANDLING QUALITIES</b>	<b>ABDOMINAL CAPACITY</b>	<b>MOLT</b>	<b>OTHER OBSERVATIONS</b>
<b>1</b>					
<b>2</b>					
<b>3</b>					
<b>4</b>					

Final rank \_\_\_\_\_



# Live Birds – Oral Reasons

---

- Organize your placing into pairs
- If your placing is 1-2-3-4
  - Top pair = 1 / 2
  - Middle pair = 2 / 3
  - Bottom pair = 3 / 4
- Use standard reason format

# Live Birds – Oral Reasons

Good afternoon. I am contestant # 261.

- I placed this class of White Leghorn hens, 1-2-3-4.
- In the top pair, I placed 1 over 2 because . .
- In the middle pair, I placed 2 over 3 because . . .
- In the bottom pair, I placed 3 over 4 because . . .
- For these reasons, I placed this class of White Leghorn hen 1-2-3-4.

# Practice Website

[http://www.animal.ufl.edu/Youth/poultry/past\\_production/pastprodlist.htm](http://www.animal.ufl.edu/Youth/poultry/past_production/pastprodlist.htm)

- [www.animal.ufl.edu](http://www.animal.ufl.edu)
- Click on Youth Poultry Judging
- Click on Show Me How
- Click on Go to Main Practice Menu
- Click on Past Egg Production