

GLOSSARY OF POULTRY PRODUCTION AND BREEDING TERMS

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The following alphabetical list has been prepared to help youth become familiar with words and terms used by poultry keepers. Judges may use this list when questioning youth in Poultry Fitting and Showmanship contests.

For further information, check EM 2403, 4-H Poultry Judging Series.

Abdomen—Underpart of the body from breast to tail.

Abdominal capacity—Distance between sternum and pubic bones. A measure of egg production efficiency. Good producers have soft, pliable abdomens. Poor producers have small, hard abdomens or carry a large deposit of fat.

A.B.A.—Initials of an organization devoted to the promotion of miniature sized poultry. (American Bantam Association)

A.P.A.—Initials of America's first livestock organization, which is devoted exclusively to the poultry industry. (American Poultry Association)

Axial feather—Short feather growing between primaries and secondaries of wing.

Back—Top of body from base of neck to base of tail.

Bantams—Miniature fowl which are about $\frac{1}{5}$ the size of standard fowl.

Barring—Two alternating colors on a feather running across width of the feather.

Beak—Horny formation projecting from front of head of chickens, forming the forward mouth-parts.

Bean—Raised hard, bean-shaped protuberance on tip of upper mandible of a waterfowl.

Beard—Cluster of longer feathers hanging from upper throat of some breeds.

Beefy head—Thick, meaty head with thick eyebrows and sunken eyes as found on poor egg producers.

Bird—Term often used to refer to an individual of any breed of poultry.

Blade—The portion of a single comb below the points.

Blue—Term used in referring to the slaty color of some varieties of poultry.

Body—That portion of a bird exclusive of head, neck, wings, tail, thighs, shanks, and toes.

Booted—Fowl with feathered shanks and toes and having vulture hocks.

Bow-legged—Deformity in which legs are farther apart at hocks than at feet.

Brassiness—Term describing the light yellowish metallic cast commonly found in plumage of varieties.

Breast—Entire forward part of body from juncture of neck and body down to rear point of keel bone.

Breed—An established group of fowls, related by breeding and possessing a distinctive shape, the same general weight, and often a variety of colors and/or combs.

Bronze—The desirable rich lustrous copperish-bronze color found in Bronze turkeys. The metallic colored cast sometimes found in plumage of black varieties of chickens.

Buff—Medium shade of orange-yellow color with a rich golden cast.

Buttercup comb—A comb consisting of a single leader from base of beak to a hollow crown set firmly on the center of the head surrounded by a circle of regular points.

Capacity—General term to describe width and depth of bird's body and appearance of egg laying traits.

Cape—Short feathers at juncture of back and neck underneath hackle and between shoulders.



Capon—A castrated male fowl.

Carriage—Posture of the bird. Also applies to the angle of wing, tail and/or back.

Caruncles—Fleshy protuberances on naked portions of head, face and neck of the Turkey and Muscovy Duck.

Classification of poultry—Divided into further subdivisions as:

Class—Area bird originated

Breed—General body type—body conformation

Variety—Plumage pattern, color, and comb type

Close feathered—Term used to describe a bird whose feathers are held tight to the body.

Cock—A male fowl 1 year old or more.

Cockerel—A male fowl less than 1 year old.

Comb—The fleshy protruding part on top of head of a fowl. It is larger in the male than female. Types of comb include: Buttercup, Cushion, Pea, Rose, Silkie, Single, Strawberry, and V-Shaped.

Condition—State of a fowl in regard to health, including sufficient fleshing and cleanliness and brightness of plumage.

Coverts—Feathers that cover base of primary and secondary wing and main tail feathers.

Crest—A globular tuft of feathers on top of head of some breeds.

Crop—Enlarged part of gullet lying between neck and body and in which food is stored and moistened before passing into gizzard.

Crow head—Narrow, shallow head with an abnormally long beak.

Cushion—Mass of feathers over back and base of tail of a fowl, giving it a rounded effect.

Cushion comb—A solid low, moderately small comb that is smooth on top. Front, rear and sides are nearly straight with rounded corners. It is free of spikes.

Defect—Anything short of perfection.

Dewlap—A growth of skin that hangs under the rear of the beak and upper throat.

Disqualification—Term used to describe a serious deformity or a defect that prevents a bird from receiving an award.

Down—Soft, fine, fluffy covering of a baby chick or the soft, fluffy part of a feather below the web.

Drake—A male duck.

Ear—Small opening on each side of head covered by a small tuft of stiff feathers.

Ear lobes—Round, fleshy patch of bare skin on each side of head varying in size, shape, and color according to the breed.

Edging—Very narrow band of contrasting color around edge of a feather or along upper or lower web of primaries and secondaries.

Face—Skin around and below eyes on either side of head of a fowl. Usually red but may be white or purple in some breeds.

Faking—Removal or concealing of a disqualification or serious defect, thus creating merit that does not naturally exist. When found the bird is disqualified.

Feather—One of the epidermal outgrowths, which collectively forms the external covering or plumage of a bird.

Feather-legged—Term used to designate birds having feathers on the outer sides of shanks and on the outer or outer and middle toes.

Feather-web—That portion of a feather formed by barbs united by little hooklets that give a solid appearance to that portion of the feather and which give the surface color to the bird.

Finish—Completion of growth—the bloom of health, ideal weight, and perfection.

Flights—Primary wing feathers, often used with waterfowl or pigeons.

Fluff—Soft, downy portion of a feather located on lower part of shaft. Also the soft, down feathering on inner sides of lower thighs and below vent.

Foreign color—Presence of a different color than desired. May be a defect or a disqualification.

Fowl—Collective term applying to chickens, ducks, geese, and turkeys. Poultry means the same thing.

Frizzle feather—Term used to describe feathers that are curled or that curve outward and forward. It is a desirable characteristic of certain breeds.

Gamy tail—Term used to describe a tightly folded, slim, tapering, whip-like tail. A desired characteristic of some breeds and a defect in others.

Gander—Male goose.

Goose—Female goose.

Ground color—Basic or primary color of the web of a feather. In laced, penciled, barred, spangled and mottled varieties, it is the basic color to which the markings are added.

Hackle—Rear and side neck plumage of a male bird.

Handling quality—Term used to describe the general production qualities of the laying hen.

Head—Term used to describe the part of bird that includes the beak, skull, face, eyes, ears, ear lobes, comb, and wattles.

Hen—Female fowl usually 1 year old or more.

Hen feathered—Male having oval instead of pointed sex feathers in the hackle, saddle, wing bow, and sickles.

Hock—The joint between lower thigh and shank.

Horn—Term used to describe the various shadings of color in the beak of some breeds such as the Rhode Island Red, Silver Spangled Hamburgs, etc.

Iris—Colored circle that surrounds the black pupil of eye.

Keel—Lower portion of breast bone that resembles the shape of the bottom of a boat.

Keel bone—Sternum or breast bone.

Knee or knee-joint—Joint between the upper and lower thighs.

Knob—Horny protuberance at junction of head and upper bill on African and Chinese geese.

Knock-kneed—Deformity in which legs are closer together at the hocks than at the feet and knees.

Lacing—A border of contrasting color around the entire web of a feather.

Leg—Includes upper and lower thigh and shank.

Lopped comb—A comb that falls over to one side.

Luster or sheen—A glossy appearance of the feather due to reflection of light rays. It usually indicates good physical condition.

Main tail feathers—Straight, stiff, long feathers on the tail.

Mealy—Term used to describe plumage flecked with a lighter color as if dusted with flour.

Mossy—Indistinct or irregular markings that destroy desirable contrast with ground color.

Mottling—Plumage in which surface is spotted with colors or shades of color that differ from ground color.

Muffs—Cluster of feathers below and around sides of eyes and extending from upper throat to ear lobes.

Nostrils—Openings of the respiratory system at base of upper portion of beak.

Oil gland—Large gland on the back at base of tail that secretes an oily fluid used in preening the bird's feathers—called the uropygial gland.

Pea comb—A medium length, low comb, the top of which is marked with three low lengthwise ridges, the center one slightly higher than the outer ones. Top of the ridges have a wavelike appearance or have small rounded points.

Pearl eye—Creamy white or very pale bluish gray colored eye.

Penciling—Narrow concentric linear markings inside the edge of feather web.

Pigment—Presence of yellow color in yellow skinned breeds—used to estimate length of laying period—caused by the storage of Xanthophyll in fatty tissue of the skin, beak, and shanks. Onset of egg production causes areas to lose color in a set pattern.

- Plumage**—Collective feather covering of entire body of a fowl.
- Poult**—Young turkey.
- Poultry**—General term applied to all domesticated fowl, including chickens, turkeys, and waterfowl, etc. Fowl means the same thing.
- Primaries**—Long, stiff feathers of the wing growing from the pinion or outer segment of wing.
- Pubic bones**—Thin, rear portion of the hip bones that form part of the pelvis. Considered important in evaluating productivity of the female fowl.
- Pullet**—Female fowl less than 1 year old.
- Pupil of eye**—Round, black center of the eye through which light is admitted.
- Quill**—Hollow and transparent hornlike portion that attaches the feather to the fowl's body.
- Roach back**—Deformed, humped back.
- Rose comb**—A solid, broad, flat topped, low, fleshy comb, which comes to a point at the rear. Shape of this comb varies in different breeds.
- Saddle**—Rear of the back of a male fowl, covered with long, pointed feathers.
- Scales**—Thin, horny growths covering shanks and top of toes of a fowl.
- Scaly leg**—A condition of the shanks and toes of a fowl caused by small burrowing mites that raise and deform the scales.
- Secondaries**—Long, stiff wing feathers growing from the middle wing segment.
- Serrated**—A toothed saw-like top edge of a single comb.
- Sex feathers**—Pointed feathers in the hackle, back, saddle, sickles, and wing-bow of a male fowl. These same feathers have an oval shape in females.
- Shaft**—The part of a feather that is an extension of the quill the entire length of a feather. The barbs are attached to this portion.
- Shafting**—A color characteristic where the shaft of a feather is either lighter or darker than the color of the web.
- Shank**—Portion of leg below the hock, not including foot and toes.
- Shoulder**—That portion of the bird where body and wing join.
- Sickles**—Long curved feathers of a male chicken's tail.
- Side sprig**—Pointed growth on the side of a single comb.
- Silkie comb**—A round, somewhat lumpy comb, often greater in width than length. It is covered with small corrugations on top and usually crossed with a narrow indentation slightly to front of the middle of comb.
- Single comb**—A moderately thin comb firmly attached from the beak along the top of skull. Top portion has five or six rather deep serrations or distinct points. Middle points are higher, forming a semi-oval when viewed from side.
- Slipped wing**—Wing that is carried improperly. Either individual feathers of the primary section overlap in reverse order or entire section is held outside the secondaries rather than under the secondaries.
- Spangle or spangling**—A distinct marking of contrasting color at the extremity of a feather. It is shaped like a V with a rounded end.
- Spike**—Single elongated tapering growth extending from rear of a rose comb.
- Split comb**—A definite division in the rear of blade of a single comb. A disqualification.
- Split crest**—Crest in which there is a division with feathers falling to either side.
- Split tail**—Tail that has a distinct gap at center of the tail feathers.
- Split wing**—Wing that has a distinct gap between primary and secondary feathers.
- Spurs**—Stiff, horny projections from rear innerside of shanks. They are most prominent in male birds.

Squirrel tail—Tail that is carried at an angle greater than 90°.

Standard fowl—Large or regular sized breeds of poultry.

Stippled or stippling—Effect produced by contrasting dots of color on the ground color of the web of a feather.

Strain—Fowl of any breed or variety that have had special breeding and selection for a number of years and that reproduce uniform characteristics with marked regularity.

Strawberry comb—Low, short comb set well forward on the head. It is wider at the forward end and has a slightly bumpy surface.

Stripe—Contrasting band of color running parallel to shaft in the web of the hackle feathers of some varieties and also in the saddle feathers of a few varieties.

Stub—Short feather usually found on the shanks or on or between the toes.

Surface color—Color of that portion of the plumage that is exposed when the feathers are in natural position.

Symmetry—The beauty of shape arising from a perfectly proportioned bird when viewed as a whole.

Tail—Fleshy and bony protruding part at the posterior of a fowl from which the sickles and/or other large straight stiff feathers grow.

Telescope comb—Pea comb with an indentation at the rear of a rose comb with an inverted spike. A disqualification.

Texture—Applied to condition or size of the grain and quality of the skin of comb, face, wattles, and ear lobes.

Thigh—Part of the leg between hock and body.

Throat—Upper, forward, and under part of the neck of a bird.

Thumb print—Disfiguring indentation on the side of a single comb. A defect.

Ticking—Specks or small spots of color different from the ground color, which are required on some portions of some breeds and are disqualifications in others.

Tom—Male turkey.

Trio—At a show it is the term used to describe a cock and two hens or a cockerel and two pullets shown as a unit.

Twisted comb—Single or pea comb that has curves or other faulty shapes.

Twisted feather—Feather in which the shaft and web have a corkscrew appearance.

Type—The ideal general shape and form common to all fowl in a breed.

Undercolor—Color of the lower or fluff portion of feathers. Not visible when feathers are in natural position.

Variety—Sub-division of a breed, distinguished either by color, color and pattern, or comb.

V-shaped comb—Comb formed of two well-defined horn shaped sections that are joined at their base.

Vulture hocks—Formation of stiff, straight, and rather long feathers growing from the lower part of the lower thighs and projecting backward and downward.

Wattles—The thin pendant growth of flesh at either side of the base of beak.

Web of feet—Skin growing between the toes.

Willow—Dusky yellowish-green color found on shanks, feet, and toes of some breeds and varieties of fowl.

Wing web—Triangular skin in front and between joints of the wing.

Wing bars—Distinct band of color across middle of wing.

Wing bay—Triangular section of wing, below wing bar and terminating at wing points, formed by the exposed portion of the secondaries when wing is folded.

Wing bow—Surface part of wing below shoulder, and between wing covert and wing front.

Wing fronts or wing butts—Extreme front portion of wing at shoulder, forward of the wing bow.

Wing points—Ends of primaries and secondaries.

Wry tail—Tail of a fowl permanently carried to one side of the vertical.

NOTE: A fun learning experience can be developed by using "Poultry Talk" for a poultry term spell down. Have the whole group or two teams stand. Read the description of the term and if the person can give the correct term

from the description he or she remains standing. If missed, the person must sit down and the next person is asked to give the term. Continue until one team wins or only one person is left standing.

Sources of information:

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Some production terms added:

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General Key to Standard Classification by Class, Breed, and Variety

CLASS

American	Mediterranean	English	Asiatic
a. clean shanks	a. clean shanks	a. clean shanks	a. feathered shanks
b. yellow skin	b. yellow skin*	b. white skin†	b. yellow skin
c. red ear lobes	c. white ear lobes	c. red ear lobes	c. red ear lobes
d. dual purpose	d. small size	d. dual purpose	d. massive size
e. medium size	e. tight feathering	e. medium size	e. loose plumage

* Exception Minorca

† Exception Cornish

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