

## MARYLAND BROILER PRODUCTION PROJECT

### **SELECTING AND DRESSING BIRD SAMPLES**

(Revised June 1999)

The broilers should be dressed by the project member so that they will learn how to dress their birds and offer him/her encouragement to market them to members of the community.

The exhibit of broilers for the contest will consist of two cockerels/pullets, which are to be presented in the fully dressed and eviscerated form. The birds should be dressed at least a day in advance so that when they are delivered to the show, they will be completely chilled.

#### **SELECTING BIRDS:**

The bird sample, select birds with well-proportioned bodies.

- A. Breast – Broad, long, full-meated, well-rounded.
- B. Keel Bone – Well-covered, straight, parallel to the back.
- C. Thigh Joint – Plump, full-meated.
- D. Drumsticks – Full-meated, moderately short.
- E. Back – Wide, long, flat and well-fleshed.

The bird's condition and appearance for the contest should be free of pinfeathers with the skin bright, smooth textured and uniform in color. The broilers should have good finish with little or no dark meat showing through the skin and the entire carcass covered with a layer of fat. Any birds having the following conditions **SHOULD NOT BE ENTERED**: crooked or dented keel, hunched backs, broken bones, calluses or blisters on breast, torn skin, black or green color showing through the skin.

**TIPS BEFORE KILLING:** Before killing the birds, take away their feed for about 24 hours so that the crop will empty. However, be sure that they still have a supply of water. This will make the dressing job easier and improve the dressed-out appearance.

**KILLING AND DRESSING:** The best way to kill the bird, is to hang it up by the feet and cut both arteries which are located one on either side of the neck just behind the lower jaw. Let the bird hang in this position for at least 5 minutes to assure proper bleeding.

To prevent bruising the bird while bleeding, it may be placed in a small cloth bag with one corner clipped off so the head may be extended through the hole. In a similar manner, the bird may be placed in a large empty plastic bleach bottle with the bottom cut out and the neck of the bottle cut off. If this is not possible, hang the bird so it won't hit against a wall as it is bleeding.

**SCALDING AND FEATHER REMOVAL:** The most important step in dressing the chicken is in having the proper water temperature for scalding the bird. The temperature of the water should be between 130° Fahrenheit and 155° Fahrenheit, if the feathers are to be removed easily. Scald for 1-2 minutes at 130° Fahrenheit. It is best to have water that is near 130° Fahrenheit for dressing birds to exhibit in the contest. Water above 155° Fahrenheit will cause the outer layer of skin to come off and the bird will lose some of its desirable appearance.

A thermometer should be available to test the water to insure it is in the range of 130°- 155° Fahrenheit. It is also a good idea to dress a bird or two to get an estimate of how warm the water should be.

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Dip the bird up and down slowly three (3) times and test how easily the feathers are to remove. If they are still hard to remove, more hot water should be added. After the desired water temperature is obtained (130° Fahrenheit), scald your birds and pick the feathers off.

EVISCERATION: To remove the entrails, start by cutting off the oil gland at the base of the tail with a knife. Next, make a stab wound between the base of the tail and the vent. With a pair of scissors, cut around the button hole so that the intestine can be removed. Please be careful not to cut through the intestine. Then with your index finger, pull the button hole and bursa out of the body cavity. Do not allow the vent, which is still attached to the intestine, to fall back into the body cavity. This will contaminate the carcass.

To remove the remaining organs, take three fingers and insert them through the opening in the body cavity. Slide the hand between the organs and the backbone of the chicken until you have reached the front of the body cavity near the heart. Rotate your hand to the side of the chicken's body cavity and with a cupped hand, remove the air sac, heart and intestines at one time. Clip the intestine ahead of the proventriculus, or true stomach, to avoid contamination of the carcass.

Clip off the liver, heart and gizzard. Cut the gizzard in half, wash out the grit and peel the inside layer of skin off. Place the liver, heart and gizzard in a small plastic bag.

Next, slit the skin on the back side of the neck from the base of the neck about 2-3 inches down toward the end of the neck. Then reach in with the index and middle finger and pull the crop and esophagus out.

Then take a "rake" and pull out the air sacs and lungs, which are still attached to the body wall.

The next step is to remove the neck and fold the skin around the neck backwards and tuck under the wing. Carefully pull the neck skin away from the neck and toward the breast. With the neck skin hanging down out of the way, cut the neck off at its base between the wings. Fold the neck skin back over the bird's back and slip under the tucked wings. This operation will give the bird a nice appearance.

Then, remove the feet by cutting them off at the hock joint.

At this point, be sure to do a thorough rinse of the bird with clean, fresh water.

Then, chill your birds on ice to bring the temperature of the broiler carcass down quickly. Cover the birds with a damp cloth, place in plastic bags and store in the refrigerator. The morning of the show, remove the damp cloth.

It is not necessary to display the birds with the giblets wrapped and stuffed inside the carcass.