How To Do
Turkey Showmanship

This is the Emerald Star Project of Ann Gamlen
April 22, 2007
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Turkey Showmanship

Hello, my name is Ann Gamlen, from the Trinity County Hayfork Timberjacks 4-H. There are several steps to Turkey Showmanship and I’m going to explain how to do each step.
Show uniform. The 4-H show uniform includes the following items: white shirt (shirt should be long sleeved, tucked in, with collar, and a button-up front), white pants (use a pair with belt loops), black belt, 4-H scarf/tie (scarf should be under the collar and is for girls and the tie should have its sides tucked in and is for boys), 4-H hat (should have the clover toward the front, green hats are for younger members 13 and below, seniors 14 and up should have white hats), socks and shoes (shoes should be tie-ons, not slip-ons), and while in the show ring you should not be wearing any jewelry, makeup, or watches, belt buckles are allowed.
Picking your Turkey. It is best to get a turkey from a very young age, the younger the better. (That way you can get it used to you, so it’s more likely to cooperate when you practice). Although, if you are getting an older bird you have to consider which gender. The toms are more likely to challenge you, however, it is in my opinion the hens may get bound (the egg stuck inside them) if they get turned upside down. If you are going to use the same bird over and over I would suggest getting a male. That way you won’t have to worry about eggs. If you are doing a meat pen I would suggest a female, due to their more submissive nature. Females are more likely to cooperate, and they are gone before they start laying. You also have to take into account what breed you would like. If you are going to do turkey meat pens you should go for a heavy breed, but, if you just want to do showmanship, I would suggest a smaller breed such as the Beltsville White’s.

Training your Turkey. Getting your turkey used to your presence is crucial to showmanship. If you don’t want your bird to run away the minute you let go of it in the ring you should spend at least 5 minutes with it every day. If possible you should bring tidbits for your turkey. (That way it associates you with a good thing). Also, you should pick your turkey up every now and then, to get it used to being held.

Turkey showmanship: (For practicing showmanship you should get a friend to pretend to be the judge, so you get used to acting official). Sometimes the judge will have all of you doing showmanship at once, if this happens go through all the steps as you would in individual showmanship, except, do not say the parts aloud, unless told otherwise. Also, when doing showmanship all at once don’t wait for the judge to acknowledge you.
The Turkey pose and introduction: Once called up kneel down. (One knee can be on the ground). Hold your bird, with it facing your right. Have one hand where the beard is, and one hand on its back. Wait for the judge to nod at you or call you up (for individual showmanship). If you are doing individual showmanship introduce yourself such as “Hello, my name is John Doe. I’m 12, I’ve been in the Huckleberry 4-H club for 8 years, and this is my 10th time doing turkey showmanship”.
The head: Once the judge acknowledges, face your turkey toward you. Hold the Turkey’s head in your hand. Look into both eyes. If they are the right color and clear say “they are clear and the right color for its breed”. Next look at the “snood”. (The thing that looks like a worm on top of the turkey’s head). Hold the snood up and say that it is “undamaged”, if it is. Next, look at the “nostrils”. Say they are “clear and unclogged”, if they are. Next, look at the beak and say “it is unchipped and uncracked”, if it is. Next, go to the “wattle”. (The thing hanging from the turkey’s chin). Say “undamaged and bright red”, if it is. Next, look at the “caruncles”. (Those are the little lumps at the bottom of the throat). Say they are undamaged, if they are.
The body: Move down from the head to the wings, hold one wing out, and count the feathers. There should be ten “primaries”, ten “secondaries”, and one “axel feather”. The axel feather will separate the primaries and secondaries. Count the feathers, and tell the judge how many feathers there are. Next, pull the wing up (gently) and blow on the feathers, underneath the wing, to see if there are any “lice” or “mites” on the turkey. Do the same with the next wing. (You are allowed to change hands).
Move down the back, some, and measure the width of the back, at the legs, with your hand(s), using your legs to hold the bird still. Hold your hand(s) up horizontally for the judge to see the width of the back, palm(s) toward the judge, and say “width of back”, as you show the size.
Next, move your hands down, right before the tail, and pull the little feathers up to show the “oil gland”. The “oil gland” is what the turkey uses to preen (clean) itself.
**Getting your bird upside down:** Lean over your bird and grab it firmly by the drumsticks. Make sure the head is underneath you. From here you can either heave your turkey up onto you, and stand up, with the turkey’s back against you. (This is the method for young Turkeys). Or, you can flip the turkey onto your knee. (This is the method for older, or heavier turkeys). There is no “official” method for old and young turkeys. But you have more control over young birds when they are against you. Since older birds are stronger and heavier, it is much easier to control them from the knee.
While upside down: Once you get the turkey upside down, show the “vent” to the judge, once the judge acknowledges, move down to the “keel” bone. (That is the long bone on the bottom of the bird). (The little bumps on both ends are where you measure from). (This measure helps to show how big the bird is). Once you have measured how big the keel bone is, hold finger, show how big the keel bone is.
Next, move to the “pubic bones”. (Those are the little bumps on both sides of the vent). Put your fingers between the two bones, then hold up the amount of fingers you were able to fit between the bones, vertically, palm toward the judge.
Next, measure the “depth of abdomen”. This space is located between the keel bone and pubic bones. To measure the depth of abdomen, place your hand sideways between the keel and pubic bones. Then, hold your fingers up horizontally, palm toward the judge, to show how big the depth of abdomen is.
Next, move to the legs. Show the back of one leg to the judge, and say there is no sign of “scaly mites” or “bumble-foot”, if there are none, then do the same thing to the next foot. (Mites are little bugs that crawl underneath the scales, therefore “scaly mites”). (Bumble-foot is when a bump comes up on the bottom of the foot, due to injury).
Next, gently set your bird on the ground, facing the judge, and give it a moment to get its balance. Show the judge the front of the foot, then if there are none, say there is no sign of mites. Next, count the bird’s toes, and then do the same to the other foot. Next, kneel down. Face your bird to your right, hold it, and wait for the judges instructions.
Judges instructions: One of the things your judge might have you do is walk the bird. There are two ways to walk the bird. One way to walk the bird is with a stick, or cane, and use the stick to guide your bird. The other way to walk the bird is to use your hands to guide your bird. When walking your bird, NEVER get between the judge and your bird.

Walking Turkeys by hand: Using your hands to walk your bird means you have more control over it, but you have to lean over while walking, depending on how tall you are.
Walking Turkeys with a cane (stick): Using a stick to walk your bird is easier, since you don’t have to lean over, but, you don’t have as much control over it either. To walk your Turkey, face its head away from you. If it is a bird that likes to walk just make sure to keep up with it, and guide it the right way. However, if it is a bird that doesn’t like to walk try to nudge it along, with as little interference as possible. The reason for walking the bird is so the judge can see that your bird doesn’t have leg problems.
If the judge asks you to cage your bird walk over to the cage, (do not get between the judge and the bird), open the cage and put your bird in head first.

Once you have latched the cage stand up, put your hands behind your back, and wait for the judge to tell you to get your bird.
Once your judge has told you to get your bird out, open the cage, and bring your turkey out head first.

When you have your turkey out latch the cage, pose your bird, and wait for the judge to tell you to go back to the show ring.
Questions: Your judge might want you to answer some questions about your bird. You should be familiar with breed, age, gender, and some facts about your bird. Also, if there might be a tie, or the judge wants to see how much you know about other poultry, you should know the names of at least 3 other breeds of turkeys, 3 breeds of Chickens, and 4 breeds of Geese.

I hope you enjoyed this booklet and do well at your next show.