



MELBOURNE
ROYAL
SCHOOLS POULTRY
COMPETITION



**2024 Schools Poultry
Information Booklet**

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Introduction



The Schools Egg Laying Competition, conducted by Melbourne Royal, gives students a hands-on experience raising and caring for young poultry, giving them an insight into what is required of producers in the modern commercial poultry industry.

This competition gives students the opportunity to:

- learn about biological science
- learn correct handling and caring of poultry
- understand how to compete in the pursuit of agricultural excellence

This competition gives them an opportunity to compete at the Melbourne Royal Show without the need for large space for larger livestock.

Key Information

This is a **free competition**, in which schools are provided **five Hy-Line Brown Pullets** in June to raise and care for leading into the Melbourne Royal Show. The schools then choose the **best three pullets** to present at the show and compete in an egg laying competition.

During the school terms the students are to create a large poster that contains key information about the pullets, including weight gain, feed intake etc.

The competition has **3 mandatory components**:

- Presentation of Exhibits (bird judging)
- Poster
- Egg laying

There is also an **optional 4th component**:

- Schools Poultry Film Awards

Schools will receive the scores of the presentation of exhibits (bird judging) and project by the middle of the Show week. Then the egg judging and the overall scores will be announced on Sunday 6 October.

There is more information on the judging later in this booklet.

From the arrival of the pullets there are **monthly information emails** sent out to give schools a guideline of where the pullets should be at and what to focus on each month.

More information

If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact the Competitions Show Manager of Poultry on poultry@melbourneroyal.com.au or 03 9281 7444.

2024 Key Dates

Date	Item
Monday 5 February	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Entries open. All schools are invited to submit their entries
Friday 26 April	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Entries close. All entry forms must be submitted by 5pm
June (Confirmation of date and time will be confirmed with schools individually)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Five (5) birds are delivered to your school. Birds will be approximately 6–10 weeks old and will already be vaccinated.
Tuesday 24 September	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Schools deliver birds and posters to Melbourne Showgrounds. (More information will be supplied closer to the date.)
Thursday 26 September	<p>Judging</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Presentation of exhibits (bird judging)• Project competition• Egg laying competition commences• Melbourne Royal staff collect eggs daily and place in display cabinet
Sunday 6 October	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Judging of egg laying• Awards presentation• Overall winner announced• Schools can collect their birds after the presentation
Monday 7 October	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Final day for schools to collect their birds

Caring for your *Poultry*

Before the birds arrive

Required

- Chicken coop
 - no smaller than 1.5m x 2m
 - perch – 2.5cm x 5cm
 - roaming area – no smaller than 2m x 5m
- Bedding
 - non-toxic sawdust, wood shavings or wood chips
- Water container
- Feed container

Coops or houses must be big enough for the chickens to live comfortably, flap their wings, move about freely and make a nest. Current poultry standards dictate a minimum of 0.37m² floor space per bird which works out to be a minimum of 1.85m² for all 5 pullets.

Chicken coops must provide basic protection and shelter with a floor, walls, roof, doors and windows/vents. Please be aware of foxes when setting up the chicken coop.

The floor of the henhouse/coop will be more comfortable for the pullets if bedding is used. It is recommended the bedding be 5–7cm in depth. The bedding will need to be raked out, composted, and refreshed intermittently.



Caring for your Poultry

Looking after the birds

Feed

Your pullets will arrive with a small bag of grower crumble to help you start out, then you will need to give them feed appropriate to their age. There is more information in the Hy-line Brown Management Guide, and Green Valley Grains information booklet online.

After 6 weeks of age pullets can be fed a pullet grower ration until 2 weeks before due to start laying. Giving growing pullets layer pellets too early can damage their kidneys and they may not lay, they can transition to layer pellets or mash at around 18 weeks of age.

An automatic feeder is an easy way to offer food and birds can eat when hungry. They like a good breakfast and also a big feed at around 4-5pm.

Treats should be occasional, nothing containing salt or lots of sugar. Grapes, watermelon rind, corncobs are healthy, favourite treats.

Pullets require green food too. Free time on the grass is ideal, however, if this is not suitable, tie up a bundle of fresh soft grass and hang in their house or yard and they will peck at it.

Feed needs to be kept track of for the poster project, keep a paper record of how much is given so you can add a tally up for each week, this can then be tracked in the worksheets.

Entertainment

Boredom busters are good if chickens are confined to their house. Hang an apple or corncob at pecking height, alternatively, hang a plastic drink bottle with several small holes in the base, pour $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of grain into the bottle. The hens peck at the bottle and the grain will fall naturally.

Identifying your birds

Schools are encouraged to name and create a way to identify each bird. A coloured leg band is recommended to identify each birds on arrival.

Caring for your Poultry

Health

Check your chicken's fortnightly for lice, wild birds introduce them into the environment. Lice live on the skin and can be seen scurrying away if you part the feathers. Pestene is a safe dust to apply. Look especially under the vent area down to the belly.

Visiting wild birds may introduce red mite, which hide in cracks and crevices in the henhouse structure and travel and feed after dark. They suck blood and can leave birds weak. An outbreak may kill birds. Suspect their presence if combs become pale. Check under the perch and where it rests on bearers for presence of 'white powder', which is mite dust. Treat mite sites with boiling water and when dry dust well with Pestene. Check regularly for their presence.

Hygiene

Henhouse/coop hygiene is critical for maintaining good health. Remove manure weekly and brush dust and webs off walls. No treats should be left on the ground overnight, bin them or rats may visit.

Rodents will be in the area and suddenly turn up. Poultry coops are an easy food source and can be infested. Safe/secure baiting may be required.



Caring for your poultry

Bringing your birds to Show

Cage/Crate

- Minimum size 20cm x 25cm (w x h) per bird
- Ridged floor, so they can grip whilst travelling.
- Well ventilated.

Poultry should be carefully loaded into clean cages or crates that should be designed to prevent any part of the bird protruding during travel. Cages/crates should be well ventilated and of sufficient height to allow birds to stand.

Cardboard boxes are not recommended due to the difficulties providing adequate ventilation and the possibilities of birds overheating.



Compulsory *Tasks*

Presentation of the Exhibits (bird judging)

Schools will receive five pullets that are approximately 6–10 weeks old. Schools are required to raise their birds to 27 weeks before selecting **three uniform pullets** for competition in the Melbourne Royal Show.

Pullets must be of good health and be laying prior to their arrival at Melbourne Showgrounds on Tuesday 24 September. Judging of the three birds will occur on Thursday 26 September.

Exhibit judging criteria

Criteria	Weight of Points
Evenness of selected birds	30
Overall health & freedom from parasites	10
Cleanliness and brightness of plumage	10
Condition of comb, eyes & wattles	10
Body weight vs. commercial standard for age*	40
Overall Score	/100

*see the [Hy-Line Brown management guide](#) for this information



Compulsory Tasks

Poster

- Maximum size: A1 (594 x 841mm).
- Photographs, graphs and charts recommended.
- Paper mounts or corflute backing **ONLY**.
- Must be capable of mounting on a wall.

The design and content on your poster will be at your discretion but must be neat and presentable and should be the work of the students with minimal adult assistance.

Melbourne Royal suggest that your poster should identify the school and present results on the following:

- Chicken survivability
- Weight gain
- Any special experiences or observations, including photos and details of the chicken coop

Worksheets will be provided after the delivery of birds to assist with tracking and calculation – these are not required to be part of the poster but are there to offer an easy way of tracking and calculating data.

Each poster will be displayed for the duration of the Melbourne Royal Show and the lettering and other information should be of sufficient size and clarity for the public to read from a distance of up to 2 metres.

Poster judging criteria

Criteria	Weight of Points
Presentation	
Visual clarity, ease of understanding	20
Presentation of key performance measures	20
Information	
Chicken survival	10
Weight gain	15
Number of eggs laid	15
Other performance/observations	20
Overall Score	/100

Compulsory Tasks

Example poster

(Note: not a template, basic example)

SCHOOL NAME

Feed intake

Special learning observation and experiences:

- The pullets relationship with each other, who became bullies and who formed friendships?
- Have tiny eggs, soft-shelled eggs, wrinkled shelled eggs or even double-yolkers occurred?
- Hens are very smart, have they learned special tricks or activities?

FUN FACTS

Number of eggs laid



Survivability

Weight Gain

Chart Title



Group	Blue	Orange	Grey
Group 1	4.5	2.5	2.0
Group 2	2.5	4.5	2.0
Group 3	3.5	1.8	3.0
Group 4	4.5	2.8	5.0



Compulsory Tasks

Egg laying

Each day through the Show, starting on Thursday 26 September, eggs will be collected and placed on display in a cabinet. Egg judging will occur on Sunday 6 October, using standard criteria.

Egg laying judging criteria

Criteria	Weight of Points
Number of eggs laid during Show	20
Shell colour and uniformity	20
Egg size (expected for age) & uniformity	20
General shell appearance (stains, texture, shape)	10
Yolk colour	15
Albumen height and quality	15
Overall Score	/100



Non-Compulsory *Tasks*

Schools Poultry Film Awards

Schools have the opportunity to submit a video outlining what they do on a day-to-day basis to care for the pullets and prepare them for Show. Content could include but is not limited to: pullets arriving, feeding, cleaning, weighing, collecting eggs, general care of the animals and learning experiences.

All videos should be between **1 – 3 minutes long** and will be judged based on the creativity of the content. The videos will be judged by a representative of the Melbourne Royal Marketing team.

Submission: Completed videos will be required to be delivered prior to **Friday 30 August 2024**. Final copies should be sent as a soft copy via email to poultry@melbourneroyal.com.au or a similar system.

Please note: the film awards are an additional class and the videos cannot be used in lieu of the poster.

The school must ensure that permission has been received for use of images from all participants in the video prior to submission of entry into the competition.



Resources

Melbourne Royal Show Schools Poultry Competition Resources

www.melbourneroyal.com.au/schools-poultry-competition/competition-info

The Melbourne Royal website will be updated with information and worksheets for schools to access.

Agriculture Victoria – Transport and care of Poultry

agriculture.vic.gov.au/livestock-and-animals/poultry-and-eggs/backyard-poultry-eggs

Agriculture Victoria is a good resource for new and experienced poultry caretakers. It outlines the standards and requirements to achieve the best results for you and your poultry.

Australian Eggs

www.australianeggs.org.au

Explore and learn about the journey of an egg from the farm to kitchen. Australian Eggs provide a wealth of resources and detailed information about the egg industry.

Contact Details

Competitions Show Manager – Poultry

+61 3 9281 7444 | poultry@melbourneroyal.com.au

Melbourne Royal®

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For more than 175 years, Melbourne Royal has been inspiring excellence in agriculture and food production.

In this pursuit of excellence, Melbourne Royal conducts a range of world-class agricultural and leisure events throughout the year.

For more information, visit melbourneroyal.com.au

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