



**MELBOURNE  
ROYAL**  
SCHOOLS POULTRY  
COMPETITION



# **2023 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.

# 2023 Key Dates

Date	Item
Wednesday 1st February	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Entries open. All schools are invited to submit their entries</li></ul>
Friday 7 April	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Entries close. All entry forms must be submitted by 5pm</li></ul>
June (Date TBC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Five (5) birds are delivered to your school. Birds will be approximately 6–10 weeks old and will already be vaccinated.</li></ul>
Wednesday 20 September	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Schools deliver birds and posters to Melbourne Showgrounds. More information will be supplied closer to the date.</li></ul>
Thursday 21 September	<p>Judging</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Evaluation of exhibits (birds)</li><li>• Project competition</li></ul>
Friday 22 September	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Egg laying competition commences</li><li>• Melbourne Royal staff collect eggs daily and place in display cabinet</li></ul>
Saturday 30 September	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Judging of egg laying</li></ul>
Sunday 1 October	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Awards presentation</li><li>• Overall winner announced</li><li>• Schools can collect their birds after the presentation</li></ul>
Monday 2 October	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Final day for schools to collect their birds 10am – 12pm</li></ul>



# Poultry Care

## 1. Preparing for the arrival of your birds

- Creation of a chicken coop or house that is no smaller than 1.5m x 2m in size.
- 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 0.37m<sup>2</sup> floor space per bird.
- Chicken coops must provide basic protection and shelter with a floor, walls, roof, doors and windows/vents. A perch 2.5 x 5cm wide is recommended.
- 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, choose non-toxic sawdust, wood shavings or woodchips. This will need to be raked out, composted and refreshed intermittently.



# Poultry Care

## 2. Feed

- Poultry must be given proprietary feed appropriate to their age because it has all the nutrients that they need in the right proportions. 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 damages 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, favorite 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.



# Poultry Care

## 3. Care

- 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.
- 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.
- 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.



# Poultry Care

## 4. Transporting your birds

- Poultry should be carefully loaded into clean cages or crates. The minimum standard cage and crate dimensions are 20cm wide and 25cm high per bird.
- Cages/crates should have ridged floors and 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 suitable, provided they meet the size requirements. Cardboard boxes should only be used once to ensure they provide a safe and sterile transport environment for the birds.
- If using cardboard boxes, a series of small ventilation air holes need to be made along the upper part of the box.





# Tasks for Submission

## 1. Presentation of exhibits

Schools will receive five pullets that are approximately 6–10 weeks old. Schools are required to raise their birds to 27 weeks before selecting their **three best 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 Wednesday 20 September. Judging of the three birds will occur on Thursday 21 September.

## 2. Egg laying

Each day through the Show, eggs will be collected and placed on display. Egg judging will occur on Saturday 30 September, using standard criteria (see page 13). The exhibit's ability to produce a uniform production of eggs to a commercial standard and quality form part of the judging criteria.

## 3. Worksheets and Poster

Each entry should be accompanied by an A1 poster (594 x 841 mm) that is capable of being mounted on a wall as part of the Schools Poultry display. 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/team and present results on the following:

- Chicken survivability
- Weight gain
- Any special experiences or observations
- Number of eggs laid
- Feed intake (measurements in grams)

Worksheets will be provided prior to delivery of birds to assist with tracking and calculation.

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. Photographs, graphs and charts should be included wherever possible. Please use paper mounts or corflute backing only for the presentation of your posters, as photo frames are too heavy to be hung on display.

# Non-Compulsory *Tasks*

## 4. 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. Film Award classes have a \$50 cash prize available for 1st place. 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 25 August 2023**. Final copies should be sent as a soft copy via email to [poultry@melbourneroyal.com.au](mailto: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.**

# Example *Poster*

(note: not a template, basic example)

## SCHOOL NAME

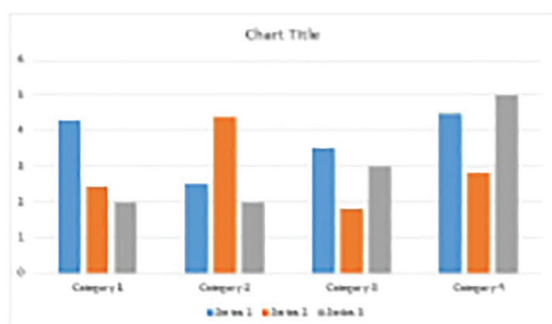
Feed intake

**FUN  
FACTS**

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?

Number  
of eggs laid



Survivability

Weight Gain



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# Judging Criteria

## Bird Judging

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
<b>Overall Score</b>	<b>/100</b>

## Project Judging

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



# Judging Criteria

## Egg Judging

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

# Resources

## Melbourne Royal Show Schools Poultry Competition Resources

<https://www.melbourneroyal.com.au/schools-poultry-competition/>

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

## Agriculture Victoria – Transport and care of Poultry

<https://agriculture.vic.gov.au/livestock-and-animals/animal-welfare-victoria/pocta-act-1986/victorian-codes-of-practice-for-animal-welfare/code-of-accepted-farming-practice-for-the-welfare-of-poultry#h2-14>

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

<https://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

Poultry Event Manager

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Melbourne Royal®

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# MELBOURNE ROYAL SCHOOLS POULTRY COMPETITION



Melbourne Royal is a member-based, not-for-profit organisation that has been proudly inspiring excellence in agriculture and food production since 1848, conducting a range of world-class events, awards and competitions each year.

Celebrating a remarkable 175 years in 2023, Melbourne Royal looks forward to celebrating agriculture, cultivating events and strengthening communities for many more generations to come.

For more information, visit [melbourneroyal.com.au](https://melbourneroyal.com.au)

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