



First, let me say that I pleased that you have chosen an animal project as your Supervised Agricultural Experience (SAE). Though it is not the only way to be active within the program, animal projects are among some of the most memorable and rewarding experiences offered in the FFA program.

EXPECTATIONS/ PURPOSE

First and foremost parents and students need to enter into this project with the mindset that this is a feeder/student's project. It is their responsibility to see this project through otherwise the lessons to be learned will be lost. Parents/ guardians are to support the feeder. The feeder will learn responsibility, time management, record keeping, finances, and leadership and hopefully build friendships all while striving for excellence in the show ring whether through humble victory or gracious defeat. Yes, it is possible to win ribbons, rosettes, plaques, buckles and monetary awards, but these are all secondary to the true purposes of the project. Please always remember that the true purpose of this FFA project is not to raise the best show animal that we can (though this is desirable), but to raise the best kid as we can. If you will look at the project through this light it will help keep everything else in the proper perspective.

This handout is meant to be a basic beginner's guide to the project, but does not contain every trick to the trade. It is important to discuss your project regularly with Mr. Brown so that an individualized schedule can be created based upon your animals' rate of gain.

ORDERING

Ordering takes place months before the chickens arrive. Typically birds are ordered in sets of 25. Some shows limit the number of sets which can be ordered. Three sets has become the norm for most shows. I advise ordering a minimum of 3 sets so that you will have a large pool to select from. All poultry orders must be submitted for the entire Chapter by Mr. Brown. Pay close attention to class announcements/FFA meetings/ and electronic forms of communication so you do not miss these order deadlines or Ag. Barn stall request deadlines should you need to house your project at the district's facility.

Major show birds will come in the last week of January while Fort Bend Fair birds will come in mid-August.

Note. These are traditional timelines and do/ sometimes change. Refer to the shows website to get the most current information.

EQUIPMENT

Brooder box for young chicks- small kid swimming pool or a 4'X8'X24" plywood box can be made
Clear plastic/tarps
50 Red paper plates, 3 or 4 inch PVC pipe slipped make good perimeter feeder (paint red)
5- large poultry hanging feeders
3- 1 gal chicken waters,



4- 3 gal waters
Reverse snap ring plies
2- 4ft Florissant lights sets
6 heat lamps (Red or Natural light bulbs)
3-25ft extension cords with 3 outlet reserves on the end
5 thermometers
Small bottle of antibiotic (Aureomycin or Terrymycin) powder and liquid B12
Fine saw dust like shavings enough to cover and maintain 3in deep (will be replaced throughout project)
4 bags of Producers or Purina Honors show feed on hand at all times,
Rubbermaid tub or trash can to keep feed dry and fresh
Postal scale that reads pounds and ounces
5 different color permit markers
1 pen and notebook (*refer to the end of the handout for example of how data to be kept once home input data into computer and email to your ag teacher*).

STALL SET UP

Pen/stall square footage is very important. Ideally it is best to have 2 sq feet per grown bird. Your specific environment/space will determine the best size and location for your pen which will in turn determine how aggressively you will need to cull your flock. Bird area will need to be able to maintain 90 degrees on week one. Ideally the Temps will step down 5 degrees every week until 65 degrees is met. This being said, you will need to be able to either heat or cool your birds as necessary depending on the show season. Maintaining the proper temperature will help to ensure an appropriate rate of growth.

Before your birds arrive-

At least 10 days before your birds arrive you need to prepare your pen to maintain a stable temperature for the newly hatched chicks. You will receive the chicks when they are about a day old and your pen must be able to maintain a consistent 90 degrees. These chicks have not yet feathered out and they are extremely susceptible to cooler temperatures. Failure to keep them warm enough will result in a high fatality rate.

- Limit chick space by placing a small kid swimming pool or building a 4'X8'X24" plywood box within the larger pen.
- Insulate the area using clear plastic/tarps/lumber etc...
- Position heat lamps 18 inches above the bird area monitor to ensure you can maintain the desired temperature (day and night).
- Use thermometers positioned throughout the brooder pen area to check temperature.
- Tie up all extension cords so not to create a hazard

5 days before birds arrive leave all lights on to allow bulbs to burn in and insure temps are maintained. Make sure you have your 4 bags of Producers or Purina Honors Turkey show starter feed.

Arrival day-

Chicks are only a day old and have not eaten or drank anything. About 12 hours before arrival/pick up time fill waterers and leave in the 90 degree pen to bring them up to room temperature. When you get your birds back to the pen each bird will need to have its' beak dipped in the water and set on a plate of feed to insure they identify water and feed. Be prepared to spend some time with them that night- it will not be a drop and run event.



FEEDING/ WATERING/ SUPPLEMENTS AND BEDDING

Show birds are truly a game of ounces gained in a finite amount of time. The birds that eat the most will gain the most ounces. Some feeders will try and find an edge in the form of a supplement. Be advised that if a bird goes off of its feed or gets sick because you changed its diet that will in the very least result in a zero ounce gain for that time if not a negative rate of gain. Truly all that is needed is good “fresh feed and water” replenished no less than 2 times a day. Ideally, feed should be topped off 4 to 6 times a day. This ensures plenty of food in front of them at all times and your presence will stir them up causing them to move around and in turn eat more. Have a small bottle of antibiotic (Aureomycin or Terrymycin) powder and liquid B12 that can be added to the water when prescribed by the Ag instructor. Sick animals will not gain weight!

Poultry feed is very high in protein. Proteins breakdown very quickly. Protein is what drives feed cost and shelf life. Because of the high protein and a short shelf life; feed stores will only hold what is needed. Think ahead and order early. Inferior feed equals a loss in gain. Local feed stores include Needville Feed, City Farmer, Steinhouser's, TSC (no show feed, but tack and other items). Eventually the red plates will be removed and hanging feeders and perimeter feeders added; both waters and feeders are to be raised chest height of the birds. Raise as needed by placing them on top of round paving concrete stones (purchased or homemade). Remove all old and dusty feed daily. All birds will start out on a Turkey show starter feed. They will remain on this feed for 2-3 weeks, depending on bird development. After the turkey feed, chicken show feed will be used.

Water- waters need to be emptied and rubbed down cleaning the inside every day and topped off no less than twice a day. A slow day on feed intake is ok, but a slow day on water is never a good thing. The lack of water consumed is telling you something is wrong. Nothing will result in zero ounce gain faster than animals going off water.

Bedding is often over looked, but plays a major role in ounces gained per day. Keeping them DRY is the key, not only on top but the sub-surface as well. Wood shaving, when wet, make it difficult to maintain floor surface temperature. Wet shavings and fecal matter break down and give off an invisible, dense gas called ammonia. It is a heavy gas that fills the room from the bottom up. If ammonia can be smelled at 5ft the birds have been in an unsuitable environment for some time. Wet shavings also become a haven for insects and fly larvae. Most wet shavings are caused when moving waters around and the birds drinking from the waters. Raking the pen and removing surface fecal droppings twice a day will increase the life of your shavings. Extra shaving in case of an unforeseen accident are a must have.

WEIGHING AND CULLING

Information is key. Two ways of gathering information are- 1: look at what birds are doing every time you enter the stall and 2: collect data.

Culling – Culling is the process of thinning out your flock to remove sick or low performing animals there by increasing the resources (room, feed and water access) for the remaining high performance birds. For first year feeders, I will be assisting you in weights and culls. First time feeders and those asking for aid, I will set up dates and times throughout the show season and we will make the rounds together culling birds. For culling you will need your markers, pen & data sheet and scale. After each weighing please place all data in the computer to email out to me. I am always available to aid in culling.

On day 14- use snap ring pliers to stretch wing bands. I am always available to aid in this area if needed and recommend that we do this step together first your first time. A broken band or wing will result in a bird that cannot be shown. A weight will be taken at this time so have all culling materials with you this day. First time feeders and those asking for aid -dates and times will come throughout the show season



letting you know when I will make the rounds. It is around this time that chicks should be feathered out and can then be removed from the small brooder pen and given the entire large pen. The pen will still need to maintain the required temperature.

It is best to remove all culls from the show bird pen. An alternative place to feed out culls until they weigh enough to be butchered is best. Feed culls the old used show feed to aid in keeping costs low. Selling butchered birds is a great way to offset the feed cost. Local butchers within the community will slaughter, pluck and bag them. Bring an ice chest -they will be given back to you when you leave with carcass (they will be processed as you wait). Also have a place to go with them once you leave. Have buyers lined up. Sell as fresh, never frozen to help you with freezer space.

TRAVEL/SHOWING

Travel

Birds will travel inside the feeder's parent's car to the show. In most cases, travel will occur on show day. Birds will be "busted" down to 4-6 birds at this point. This is the number of birds you will bring to the show. Remember transporting birds is about maintaining their environment so they will receive minimum shock. I will make every effort to be on site when we depart for the show and be at every show. Please know that some years due to the show schedule this is not possible. The show that this issue comes up is Austin (The Star of Texas Show). That's not to say that it couldn't happen at any of the other shows. If you would feel uncomfortable at the show without me there please contact me before you enter said shows.

Items needed

A minimum of 2 portable fans. 6—1 to 3 gal zip lock bags frozen with 1 inch of water when laying on their side, spray bottle to mist birds, minimum of 3 large rectangle Rubbermaid containers with 2inch holes drilled throughout for ventilation, 2- 1 gal zip lock bags full of "your feed", 1 gal of water from their water source, little containers to put feed in once on site, chairs, snacks and drinks for all in your party.

Showing

Show ring attire- boots, long sleeved collared shirt, jeans no holes, no hats, no gum, no phones will enter the ring. Before and after feeders may change into relaxed school appropriate attire.

Help- Expect to be at the show for its entirety. Never leave the show area without being excused by your instructor. Help from feeders will be needed. A minimum of one holder is needed to enter the ring with the feeder. Ideally 2 holders is best. Everyone is expected to help everyone on show day this includes other feeders outside of your FFA Chapter. With that said, your FFA comes first when aid is needed. Parents will only hold if given approval by the ring stewards —no exceptions.

NOTE- This is meant to be a guide only. Each project is unique and may require special care or modifications. This document is subject to change and revisions and should be considered to be in a continual draft format!



Data example

All replacement numbers will go after the 100 placing

Wing band #	Date 2/15	Date 2/27	Date 3/12	Date Etc...	Date	Date
00001	.15 oz	2.15 oz	6.14 oz			
00002	1.02 oz	3.02 oz	7.01 oz			
00003	.12 oz	2.01 oz	6.12 oz			
00004	.14 oz	1.13 oz (C)	Culled			
Etc...						
00100	Should be your last number for your true set					
24007	Now list all replacement numbers below the true set					

