

LIVESTOCK NEWSLETTER

ANITA ELLIS, LIVESTOCK SPECIALIST. SERVING CALLAWAY, COLE, GASCONADE, MARIES, MONTGOMERY, OSAGE, & WARREN COUNTIES. 5803 County Road 302, Fulton, MO. 573-642-0755. snella@missouri.edu.

Pasture Outlook and Tips

As many of us may notice, we've had a lot of extremes the past year until now: the 2nd coldest April followed by the warmest May, a long summer drought, followed by a very cold November and wet winter that has continued onto now. Clearly, this is having a lasting effect on our forage regrowth.

Dr. Pat Guinan, Extension State Climatologist, states that, although April has had below average precipitation, we are currently in a very wet pattern that is to continue through the first week of May. Flooding is now the big concern; with much of the state under a flash flood watch this week, and significant flood potential extending into the first half of May.

Pasture regrowth has been slow this spring, regardless of temperatures. For example, intense (continuous) orchardgrass grazing has reduced available carbs in the stem base and the lack of chloroplasts has made photosynthesis less efficient. This means a lower quality plant and a plant that is growing much more slowly than if it had larger leaves.

So, although many producers were scrambling to find hay supply and probably depleted them, turning livestock back on pasture as soon as spring hit, will mean slower regrowth.

Thus, spreading nitrogen fertilizer may be tempting to boost that spring growth. In normal years, don't apply spring nitrogen as it will increase alkaloid toxins in fescue. Large spring forage growth will provide more than most herds can eat (especially if you culled after the drought and numbers are still low). That rapid growth matures and goes to waste. This year use limited nitrogen. Instead of 40 lbs of N go with 20 lbs.

Additional Pasture Reminders:

- **Pasture Clipping:** to mitigate fescue toxicosis problems, clip seed heads in May. Waiting to

clip in late June works but doesn't have as much effect.

- When considering when to cut hay: the higher quality in May outweighs waiting for tonnage in June.

Raising Guinea Fowl

The first time I saw a flock of guinea, I was on the back of a horse. Which is not ideal, as horses are particularly not fond of these birds. After muttering my displeasure to my companions of almost being unseated because of them, I was informed that if you can handle the noise, they are actually an ideal bird to raise!

From Africa, the guinea is of the same family as the turkey, rather than chickens. They are very hardy, independent and mostly disease-free birds. Preferring to roam their area, this bird scavenges for insects (it's predicted that ticks will be much worse this year!) and slugs. Flocks will even kill and eat mice, small rats and snakes.

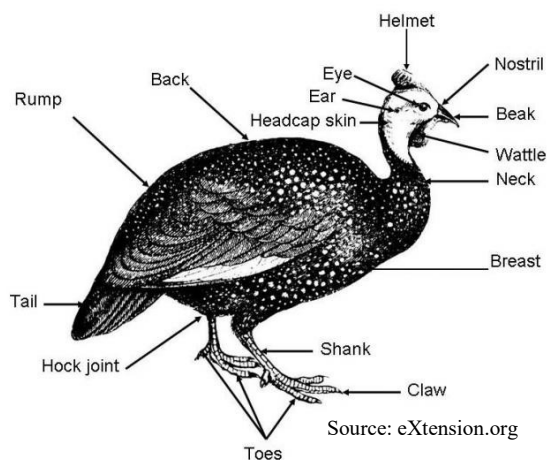
Much like a watchdog, guineas will sound an alarm if they sense something out of the ordinary. Although this can keep rodents away, your neighbors may not like it (so check with them first).

Guineas can also be raised for meat and eggs. The meat is more gamey and lean than chicken. Egg laying begins at about at 14-18 weeks of age. During the laying season, most adult (1-year-old) hens will lay one egg a day. To prevent them from laying outside, provide nest boxes and keep them confined until noon (laying occurs in the morning hours).

Although they like to be outside it is best to provide some form of shelter to protect them from the elements and predators (2 to 3 sq. ft. per adult). The shelter should contain a roof (adults can fly 400 to 500 ft) and roosting, as they prefer to roost in the evenings.

When starting out with adults, keep them confined (with feed) for a week to keep them from running

away until they get used to their surroundings. Then let one guinea out. This guinea will not leave the flock but will explore the area. After doing this for a week or so, slowly let the rest out. Guineas can meet most of their nutritional requirements on their own but if confined they will need to consume some vegetation in order to maintain good digestion. Confined or not, it is important to make sure grit (oyster shell) is available to properly digest vegetation. If not confined, don't provide too much scratch (they like wheat, sorghum, and millet grain, but not corn) as they may not scavenge for insects as much. When confining long term, guineas can be fed unmediated, commercial poultry diet (mash or crumbles, not pelleted). Keets (babies) need a 24% to 26% protein starter feed. Five to eight week olds need 18% to 20% protein feed and after this, this can be reduced to 16% layer feed.



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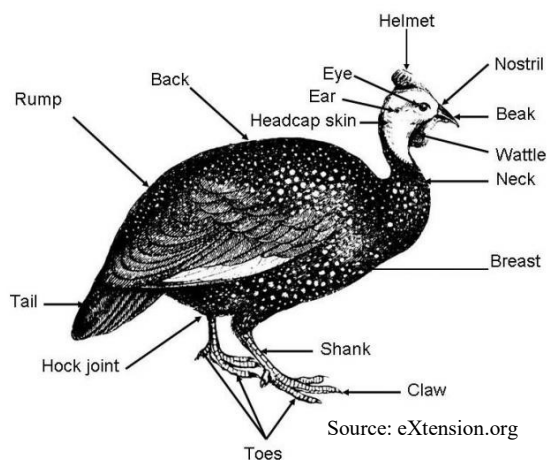
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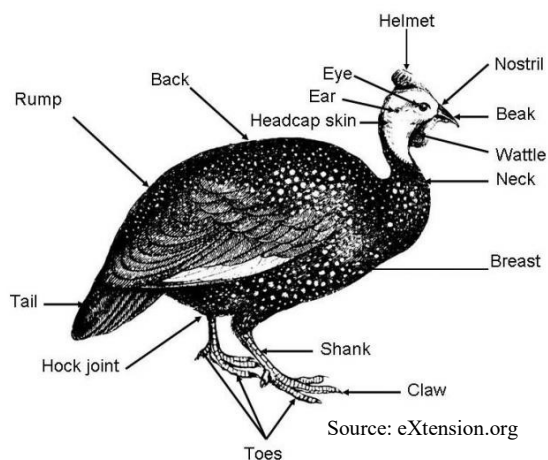
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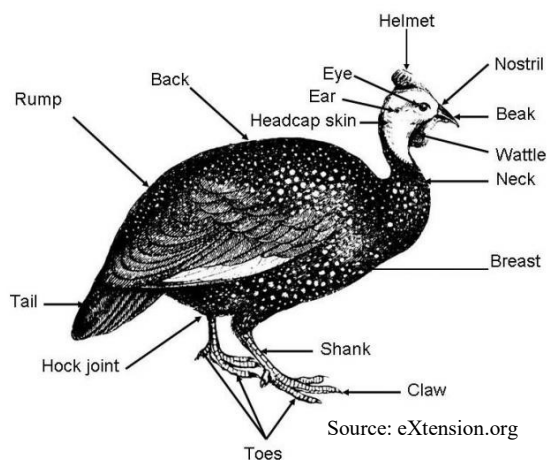
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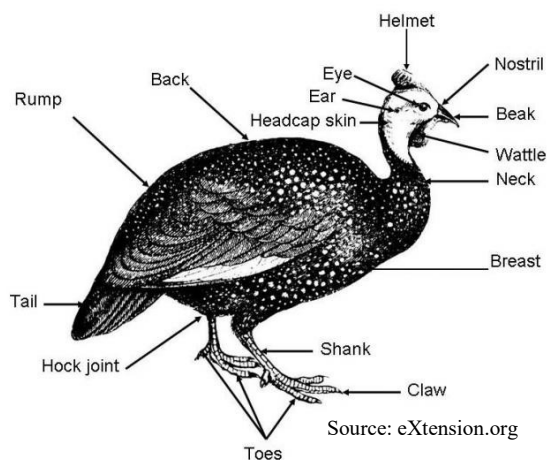
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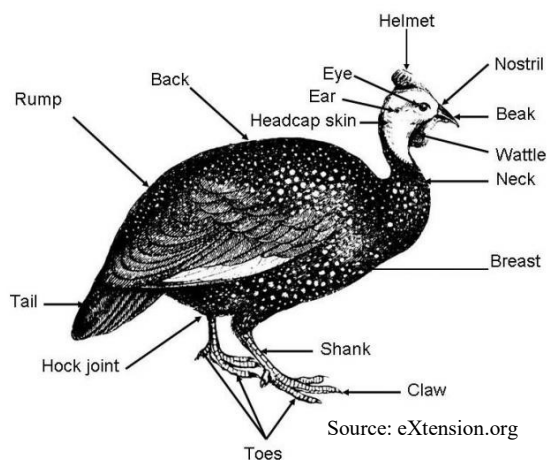
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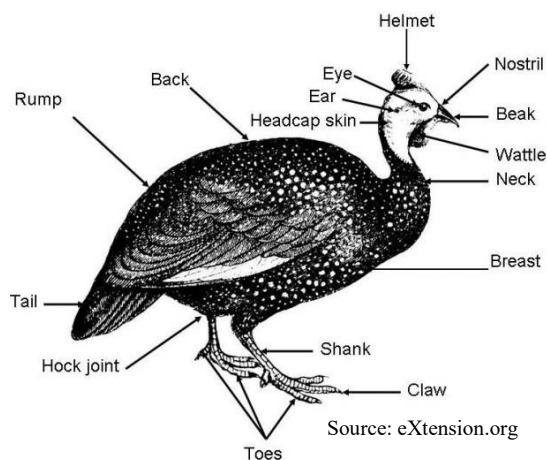
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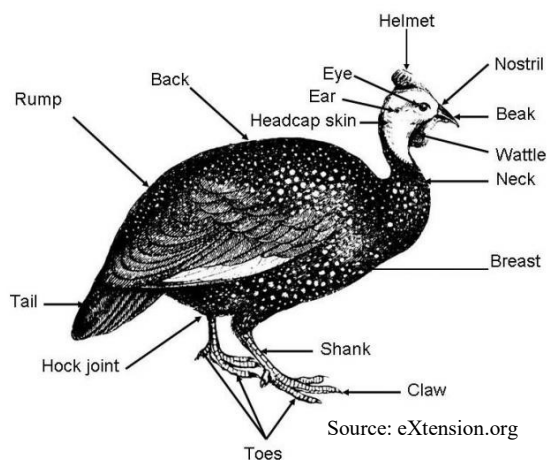
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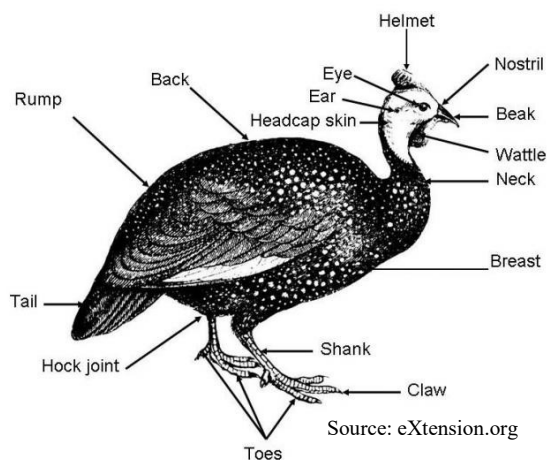
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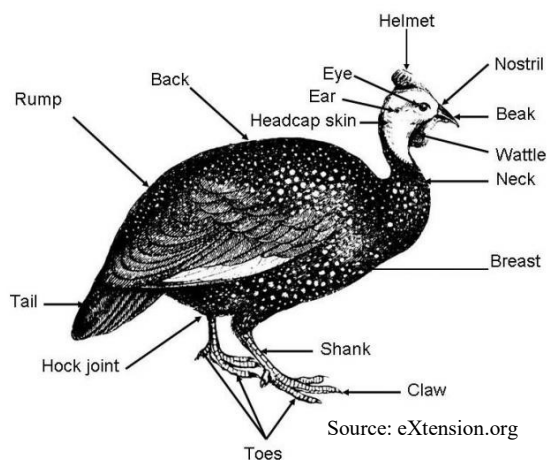
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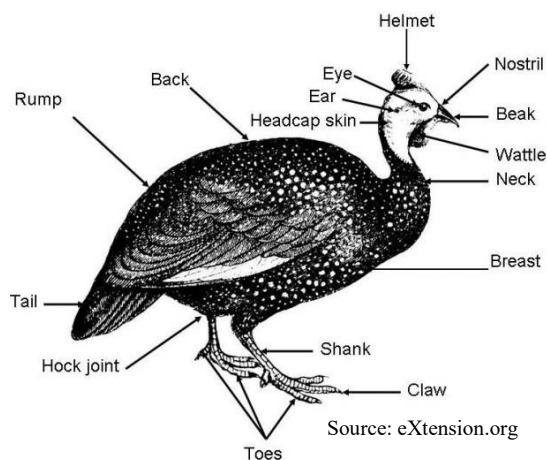
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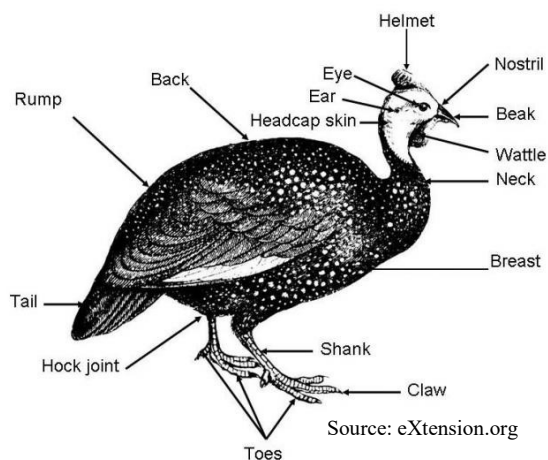
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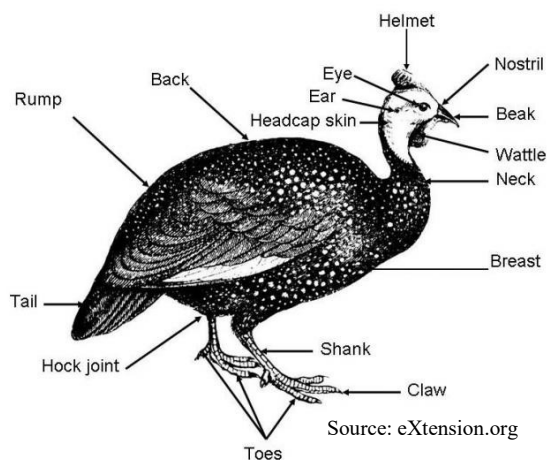
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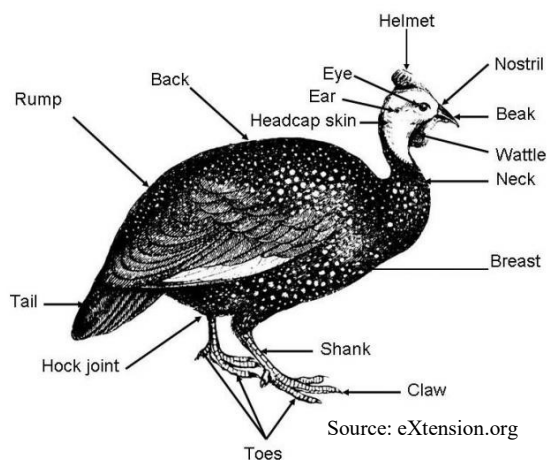
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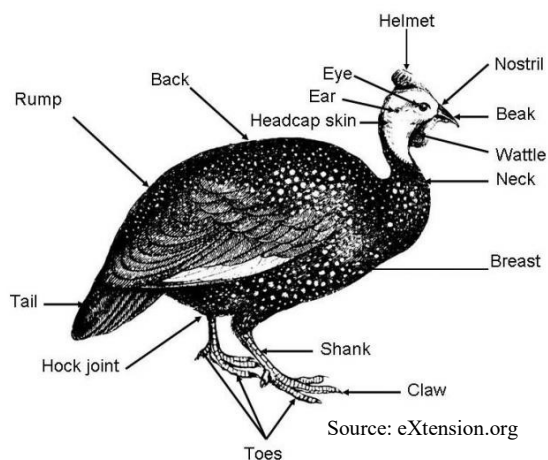
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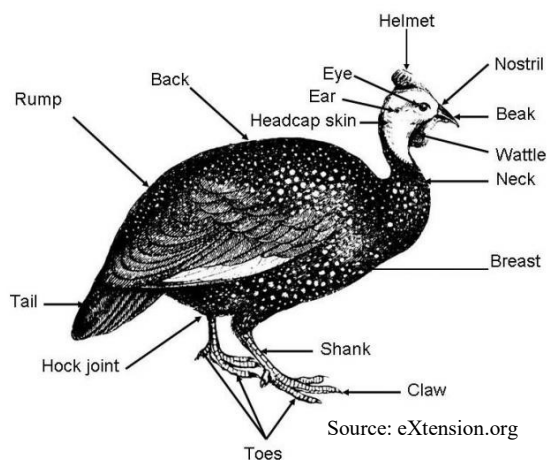
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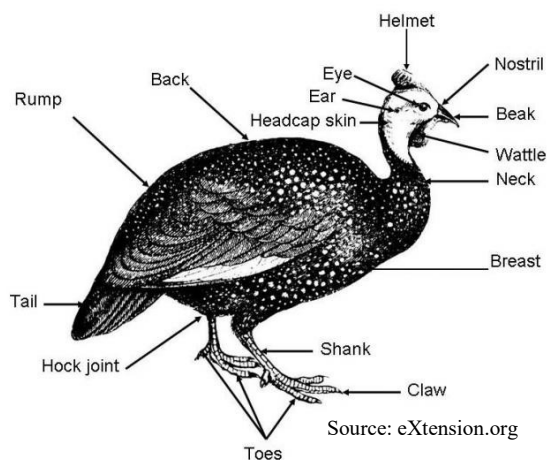
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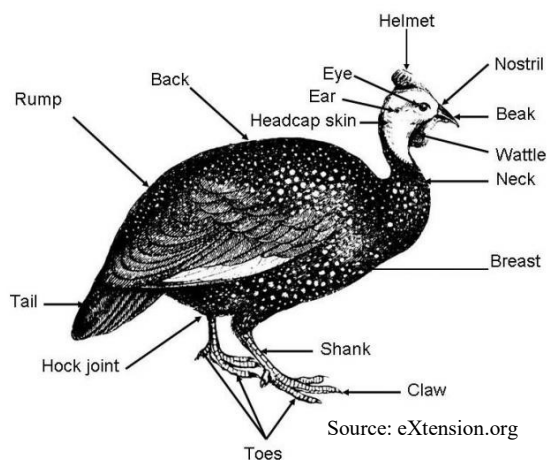
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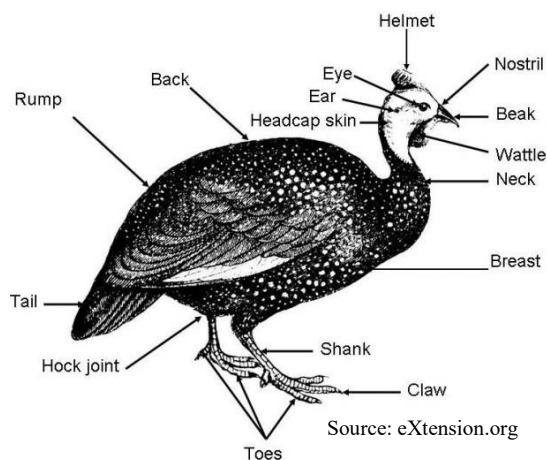
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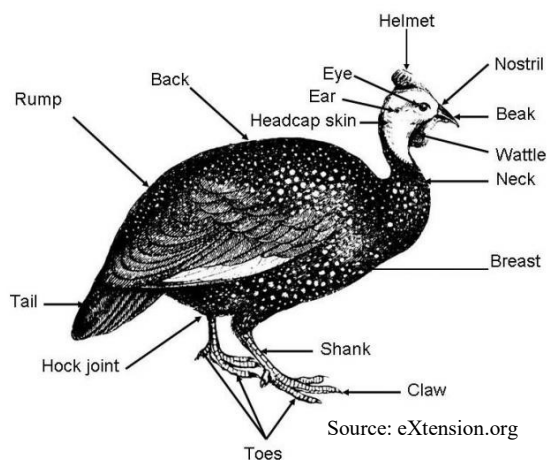
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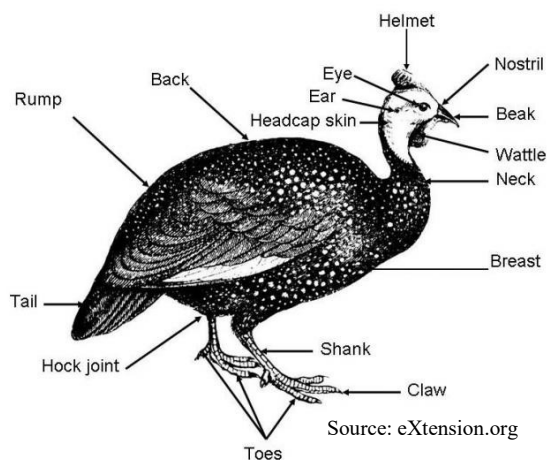
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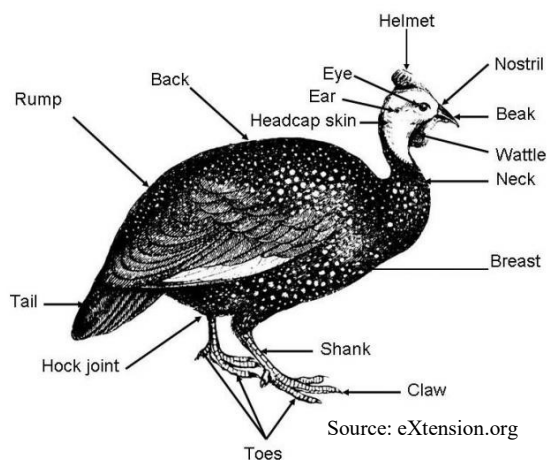
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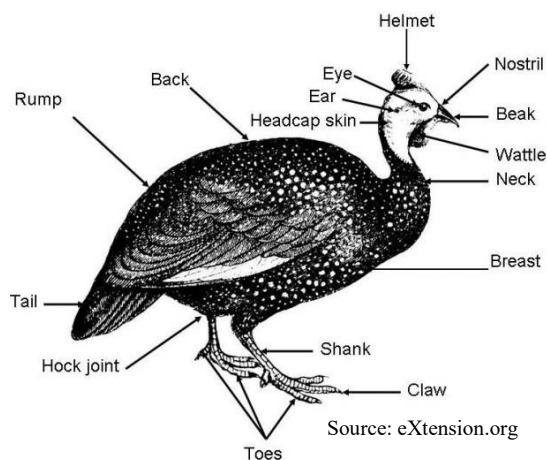
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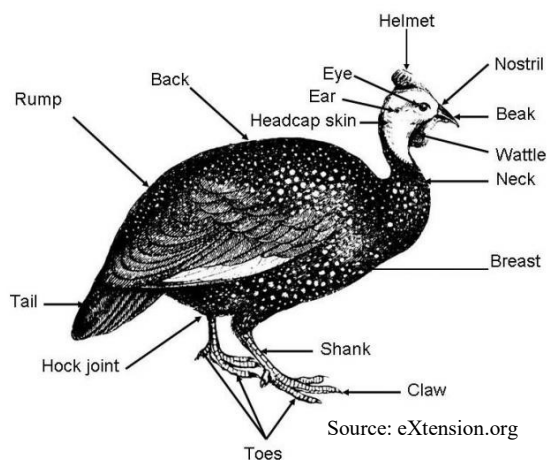
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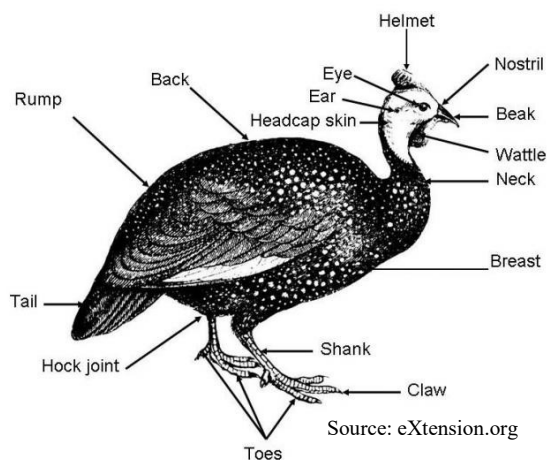
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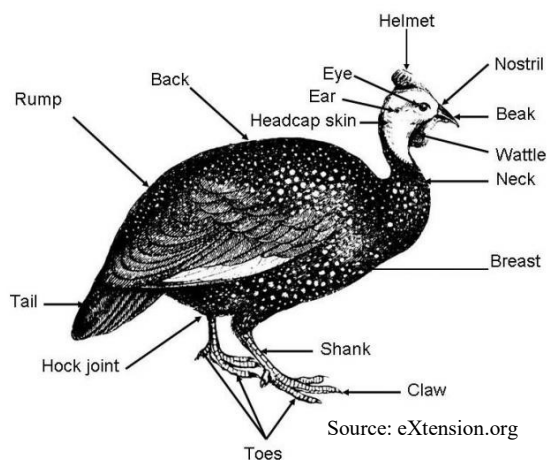
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