

Ready-To-Cook Poultry

Carcasses are graded A, B or C quality. Factors used in judging ready-to-cook carcasses in a 4-H Poultry Judging Contest are:

- exposed flesh,
- missing parts, and
- disjointed and broken bones.

Always mark your scorecard for the lowest grade defect found on the carcass. Because of the length of most judging contests, carcasses will dry out. You should not place carcasses based on off-color areas such as bruised, dried out or brown burn areas. In addition, feathers and pin-feathers are not used as a quality factor in ready-to-cook grading.

Carcasses used for contests will usually have Grade A fleshing, conformation and fat cover. You should, however, be prepared to recognize poor fleshing and finish if such birds are available for a contest.

The carcasses you judge will be hanging from shackles. This method is used so it is easier to see all parts of the bird. Carcasses cannot be touched or handled during judging. It is permissible to turn the shackle to see the whole bird as long as you do not touch the carcass. If the ready-to-cook carcasses are on plates, judge them as you see them.

Ready-to-cook poultry will be judged according to the quality specifications in Table 3. There are four weight categories for determining the size of exposed flesh on the different parts. There are no weight ranges for missing parts and disjointed and broken bones. Learn a method of judging carcasses by looking at one part at a time.

Table 3. Summary of Poultry Judging Contest Specifications of Quality for Individual Carcasses of Ready-to-Cook Poultry

Factor		A Quality		B Quality	C Quality
Exposed Flesh Carcass Weight¹					
<i>Minimum</i>	<i>Maximum</i>	<i>Breast & Legs²</i>	<i>Elsewhere²</i>	<i>All Parts</i>	
None	2 lbs	1/4"	1"	1/3 of flesh exposed on each part of carcass, provided meat yield not appreciably affected.	No limit
Over 2 lbs	6 lbs	1/4"	1-1/2"		
Over 6 lbs	16 lbs	1/2"	2"		
Over 16 lbs	None	1/2"	3"		
Disjointed bones		1 disjointed		2 disjointed <i>or</i> 1 nonprotruding broken and 1 disjointed	No limit
Broken bones		None		<i>or</i> 1 nonprotruding broken	No limit. Any protruding broken bones
Missing parts		Wing tips and/or tail removed at the base		Wing(s) to second joint. Back area not wider than base of tail and extending less than halfway between base of tail and hip joints	Entire wing(s). Back area not wider than base of tail extending to area beyond halfway to hip joint

¹Longest length for a cut and total area for tears and missing skin based on the whole part.

²For purposes of definition, the parts of the carcass shall be each wing, leg, entire breast and entire back.

Exposed Flesh

Cuts, tears and trims are a result of a miscut with a knife or tearing of the skin during a processing operation.

When ready-to-cook poultry is downgraded for cuts, tears and trims, it is based on the amount of exposed flesh, weight of the carcass and the part. The length of a cut or the amount of flesh showing on the part determines the grade. Remember: cuts, tears or trims must be completely through the skin so that the meat, called flesh, can be seen before putting the carcass in a lower grade.

The grade is determined by the amount of exposed flesh as length of cut or amount of skin missing (Table 3). Sometimes a carcass or part may have more than one cut, tear or trim. When there is more than one on a particular part, add the length or amount missing to determine the grade based on that part only. Each part is graded separately and the grade is determined by the part having the lowest grade on that carcass.

Figure 24 shows some typical cuts, tears and missing skin on the breast. The Grade A carcass is permitted to have only cuts, tears less than 1/4 inch and no missing skin. The Grade B carcass can have up to 1/3 of the flesh showing as long as meat yield is not materially affected. The Grade C carcass has more than 1/3 of the flesh showing. Figure 25 shows a trim where the meat yield is not materially affected. A good rule of thumb is that the trim is a slight trim if it does not exceed 1/8 inch in thickness (approximately the thickness of a nickel). An excessive trim that would move the carcass one grade lower would have the appearance of a cupped effect that looks deeper than 1/8 inch (a nickel).

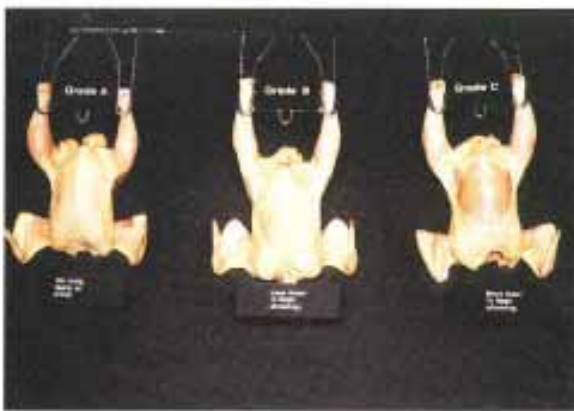


Figure 24. Cuts and tears on the breast.

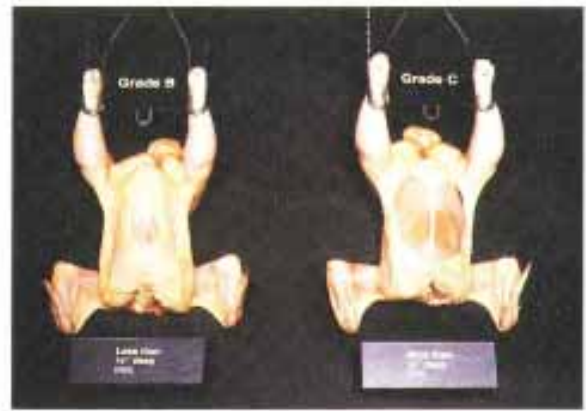


Figure 25. Trim where meat yield is not affected.

Parts such as wings and the back can have a cut or tear up to 1-1/2 inches for a Grade A carcass. A Grade B carcass is allowed to have up to 1/3 of the flesh exposed on each part beyond what is allowed for a Grade A. Any part with more than 1/3 flesh exposed is a Grade C carcass. Length, such as that from a knife cut, is as important as width that is a result of a tear in determining carcass grade. Figure 26 shows two carcasses. The carcass on the left shows a one-inch cut and the one on the right has a one-inch tear. Both are Grade A since both are less than 1-1/2 inches.



Figure 26. Cuts and tears on the back.

Refer to Table 3 for the section on cuts and tears for the lengths and amount of exposed flesh that is allowed. Remember, a slight cut into the meat not more than the thickness of a nickel (1/8 inch) so that the appearance of the part does not look bad is permitted. If the trim into the meat is more than the depth of a nickel (1/8 inch) or the trim appreciably alters the appearance of the meat, then the carcass grade should be dropped one grade. That is, if less than a 1-1/2 inch cut in back (Grade A) also cuts into the meat more than 1/8 inch or the trim appreciably alters appearance, the carcass should then be Grade B.

Processing cuts near the vent and/or breast opening less than 1 inch beyond the opening are acceptable and should not be considered in grading the carcass. If a processing cut is larger than 1 inch, down- grade the carcass to the appropriate grade. Contest officials should try to use carcasses without excessive processing cuts when setting up the contest.

Missing Parts

Missing parts to be considered in judging are the wings, tail and part of the back area if it is no wider than the base of the tail. It is important to remember that the carcass weight does not count in judging for missing parts.

The Grade A carcass may have the wing tips and tail missing where the tail joins the back. The Grade B carcass may be missing the wing up to the second joint, as well as the tail and back less than halfway to the hips

In a Grade C ready-to-cook carcass, the wing may be cut off at the third joint at the juncture of the body. In addition, the tail and back, more than halfway to the hip, may be missing. Examples are shown in Figure 27. The illustration of the Grade A carcass shows the tail off at the base and some flesh showing due to an extension of the evisceration cut. The back on this carcass had not been removed.

The Grade A carcass has the tail at the body's base and the wing tips removed. For the Grade B ready-to-cook carcass, the back area, not wider than the tail's base and halfway to the hip joint is removed. Part of the wing to the second joint has also been cut off. The Grade C carcass has the back area removed not wider than the tail's base and extended to the hip joints, as well as one wing to the third joint where it joins the body.

For missing parts, use the lowest grade that you see for wings, tail and back.

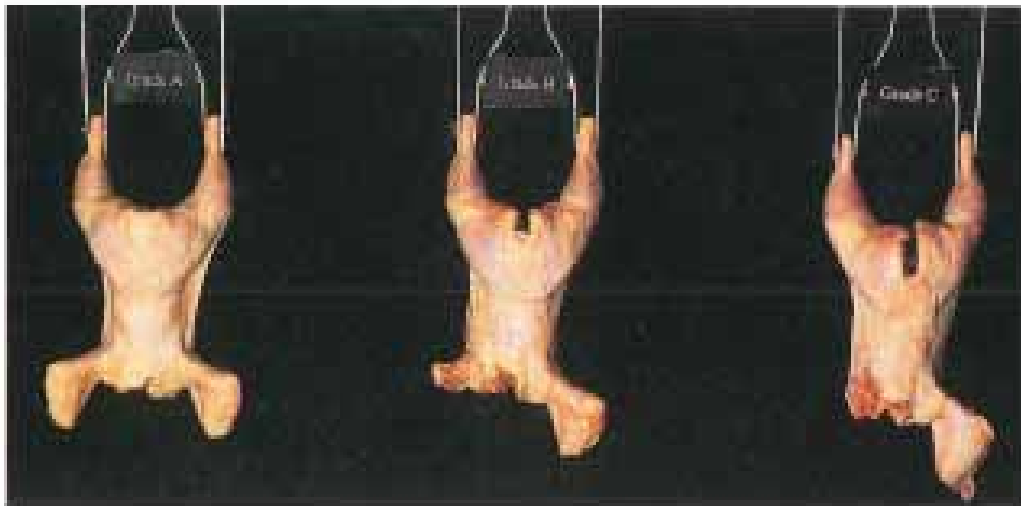


Figure 27. Missing wing, tail and back parts.

Disjointed and Broken Bones

A disjointed bone is where the joint is out of the socket. In other words, the part that is disjointed is still whole and not broken. You will be able to see the end or knobby part of the joint underneath the skin.

Broken bones occur between the ends of the bone. They can be broken so that the bone either does or does not come through the skin. When the broken bone does not come through the skin it is called nonprotruding. As shown in Table 3, a Grade A ready-to-cook carcass can have one disjointed, but no broken bones. A Grade B carcass can have either two disjointed or one disjointed and one nonprotruding broken bone. More than two disjointed or nonprotruding broken bones or one or more protruding broken bones makes the carcass Grade C. Figure 28 shows some examples of broken and disjointed bones you may see on carcasses.

As seen in Figure 28, the Grade A carcass has one disjointed bone on the leg between the thigh and drumstick where both parts would normally join together. The Grade B, ready-to-cook carcass has a broken, nonprotruding bone on the wing. The broken bone is in the middle and does not come through the skin. A broken, protruding bone is seen on the wing of the Grade C carcass.



Figure 28. Disjointed and broken bones.

Contestant # _____

Class 6: Ready-to-Cook
National & State 4-H Poultry Judging Card

Bird #	Quality			Score
	A	B	C	
1				
2				
3				
4				
5				
6				
7				
8				
9				
10				

Total Score