

# “SPEAKING OF EGGS!”

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## *Selecting your eggs for show*

### *The Experiment: How to test for freshness*

**Eggs for show:** Be sure you read the rules of the show you are attending and plan to enter eggs. Some will let you enter eggs you've gathered from your own private stock and some will let you purchase your eggs from a production farm. It's not recommended you purchase store bought eggs at any time.

**Production Farm Eggs:** When you have purchased production eggs, you should still do the work of candling and grading the eggs that you plan to enter in the show. If you are entering one dozen, then perhaps it would be best to purchase two dozen, sort and grade the eggs to find the best quality you can.

**Entering your own eggs:** Collect your eggs often, preferably two or three times a day. This will reduce the possibility that they will be dirty and stained or cracked. Frequent collection also helps to maintain interior egg quality.

**Cleaning Eggs:** Clean your freshly gathered eggs as quickly as possible. A slightly dirty egg may be brushed off or rubbed with fine grain sandpaper. A seriously dirty egg may be rinsed in water that is slightly warmer than the egg (cooler water may force bacterial through the shell into the egg). If the egg appears stained to your own eye and the stain can not be removed, do not enter in your contest. Spraying the shell with a thin film of mineral oil will help maintain egg freshness. It seals the pores, thus reducing the evaporation of moisture. Make sure to dry the egg before storing it in your egg carton.

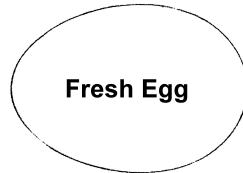
**Storing Eggs:** Be sure to always use clean cartons. Place your eggs in the carton with the small end down, then refrigerate. Eggs kept at room temperature for a day ages about the same as eggs that are refrigerated for a week.

**Did you know?** You can check your eggs or eggs purchased from the grocery store for freshness right at home. If you buy eggs from the grocery store, experiment with this freshness test.

*Floating an egg in water lets you estimate air-cell size and freshness  
without candling an egg.*

**Here's how:** Fill a bowl or pan with room temperature water if your eggs are not directly from the refrigerator or cold water just a little warmer than the eggs you are testing if they are refrigerated eggs.

- A. A fresh egg will settle to the bottom of the bowl and rest horizontally (on its side).



- B. The larger air cell of a one week old egg will cause the big end of the egg to rise up slightly from the container bottom.
- C. An egg that is two to three weeks old will settle to the bottom of the container with the big end of the egg upward.
- D. A very old egg with a larger air cell causes the egg to float.

**Exterior quality of an egg:** Exterior egg quality will be judged on the basis of texture, color, shape, soundness and cleanliness. The shell of each egg should be smooth, clean, and free of cracks. The eggs should be uniform in color, size and shape.

*Common defects* seen in the showroom are: lack of uniformity, dirty eggs, extremely small or large for the class size entered, odd-shaped eggs and cracked or rough shells.

**Interior quality of an egg:** You can check the interior quality of your eggs by holding them up to a flashlight in a darkened room. The new high intensity flashlights work especially well for this or you can purchase a candling light from several different suppliers.

*Eggs that are stale or of poor quality will have a large air cell and the yolk will be more visible and mobile.*

Stale Eggs:

1. A meat or blood spot will show up as a dark or foreign substance in the albumen.
2. When a stale egg or an egg of poor quality is broken out (cracked open), the egg white will spread or flatten out more so than a fresh egg.
3. When an egg is stale the yolk will be flat and very easily broken.

Fresh Eggs:

1. Eggs of good quality will have a firm, thick albumen that is compact and upstanding.
2. The yolk of the egg will stand up and be round in appearance.

Good luck with your egg show and have fun experimenting with fresh, store bought or eggs purchased from a production farm.