

How to read a Coop Tag

By Cheryl Barnaba

So you're trying your hand at showing chickens.

You have figured out how to get your birds tested. You sleuthed out how to get an entry form, and you even learned the hard way how to wash your birds.

Now your birds have been judged, but you just don't understand what those marks on your coop tag mean.

Don't feel bad most new people have lots of questions in this department.

For an example let's follow a judge working the Black Old English Bantam class. This is usually a pretty big class and he or she may make notes to self on the coop tags.

Those notes indicate what the judge saw that he liked or did not like. As the judge is working you may see him make checks in the upper corner of the tag. A "Check" symbol may be used as a note for a trait that the judge likes. A slash through a check can mean there is a trait the judge does not like. Some times you will see minus marks struck through the checks. These checks can indicate good qualities the judge sees on the bird, with the minus marks indicating the bad qualities found on the bird. Some Judges use Checks and X's instead. Checks being good and the X's being bad. It's a real time checks and balances system.

Every judge has different system to help him keep track of what is good and bad in a big class. Some judges prefer to leave coop tags flipped up while working to remind him of a trait he like or disliked. For example it could be a system for a bird he wants to look at again> Or a bird he does not want to consider at all. Some judges don't need to make any notes on the coop tags. They just remember what they liked and did not like in the bird.

This can be nerve racking when you standing at a respectful distance watching. You may not know what a judge is thinking until he's finished.

When he has made his final choices they are indicated by his marking of 1st -3rd or 1st - 5th place depending on what the show requires of the judge. A 1st of course means a *first place*. A judge does not have to pick a second place if the class is considered of poor quality.

Once the judge has worked though placing 1-3 Cock, 1-3 Hen, 1-3 Cockerel, and 1-3 Pullet in our Black Old English class he will then look to find his best and reserve in the

color black. The color (in this case black) is referred to as “Variety”. He will mark his best of Variety with the initials BV. The reserve of Variety is marked with the initials RV.

Then the judge will move though the rest of the varieties in the Old English class, choosing BV’s and RVs in each color.

Now its time for our judge to pick Best of Breed and Reserve of Breed in the Old English Game class. He will look back over his best of Varieties to refresh is memory. He will then pick the Best of Breed from the Best of Varietys that he choose from within the breed.

For example our BV Black Old English Hen has been chosen for Best of Breed. This bird now has two initials written on its tag: BV” and “BB”. The BB means she has won Best of Breed. This is a big win when there many exhibitors showing birds in a class.

Our judge has placed a White Old English Game Cockerel as Reserve Breed. So that Cockerel now has the initials “BV” and “RB” inscribed on it’s tag. The RB stands for Reserve of Breed. He’s second in the Class to the Black Hen.

If our judge had thought the Blacks were the best birds in the class he could have chosen Best of Breed from the BV Black and the RB from the RV Black. This does not happen often, but once in a while you will see it.

Now the little Black Old English Game Hen will be removed from her cage and placed on Champion Row fighting for her chance to go on to win Champion Bantam.

As you look around the show hall you may notice other intriguing marks on coop tags. Some of these I will list here. Most of the time if a judge makes a note on a coop tag it’s not a good thing. Any judge who takes the time to make notes on a coop tag wants the owner to know why he did not like the bird and this is his way of communicating to the owner.

CD or CND = Condition... that is to say, poor condition. A judge will not write the word Condition on a properly conditioned bird.

WS or NS means No Show. Perhaps the judge considered this to be a decent bird but he could not get it to perform well (or “show”) for him, thus making it difficult the bird difficult to place.

NW: this stands for Not Worth, which means just plain not a good bird at all, not worthy of being judged or shown in the judges view.

DQ means Disqualified. Refer to your standard of perfection for breed qualifications. This book is a recipe book of what a bird is supposed to be.

C with a minus symbol can mean poor color. Or just the word “color” can mean the color was wrong on the bird.

LC means leg color. Take this to mean the leg color is wrong.

WC means wing color is wrong.

EC means eye color wrong.

Mites. If a coop tag says mites it means the owner is *really embarrassed right now*. A show bird should **never** come to a show hall with mites or lice. A good bird with mites is *not* held in high esteem. This is a problem that no one else wants and the owner should have dealt with it at home a couple of weeks ago.

Light. This word is usually a signal from the judge that the bird's keel bone is sticking out into the palm of the judge's hand. This is not a sign of good health in the judge's eye who notes it on a tag.

WTG or “Weight” can mean the opposite of Light. Some times a judge feels a bird is obese and may mark a tag indicating this.

SP Wing/ SPL W/ SW these stand for Split Wing. This means the bird has an improper space between the two portions of its wing, the primary and secondary feathers.

“Comb” this refers to a comb that is incorrect for the breed or variety.

SS stands for Side Sprig, which is a bump on the side of a comb (usually Single Comb) that should not be there.

Stubs: this means the judge found feather stubs on its toes where none should be such as in a clean legged bird.

TF: twisted feather, the owner never have not noticed but the judge did ! It means the bird's feather or feathers twists at the root. This is a defect.

ST is short for Squirrel Tail, which means the angle of the tail in relation to the back is too high.

WT: stands for Wry Tail, this sharp eyed judge has noted that the tail bends to the side rather than staying straight. Some times a bird will not hold its tail wrong at home, but may do so in a strange cage. Its annoying but duly noted.

RB: this stands for Roach Backed, which means the back of the bird curves incorrectly. Yes RB can mean Reserve of Breed, but in the case of a bird that did not win any awards it means Roach Backed. This is a common problem in some breeds.

Toe: this usually means a missing toenail or inadequate toe feathering (for feather footed breeds.) Some times when a judge writes “toe” when the toe is discolored.

“Age” this indicates the bird is too young to be shown, or entered improperly (aka an obvious cock bird shown as a cockerel and so on.) Most of the time this is a beginners mistake.

Keel: this generally means the bird has a crooked keel, also known as breast bone.

Hock: this refers to a bird that is either Cow Hocked (knock kneed), or Vulture Hocked when it should not be for the breed. Again check your standard of perfection for direction on what the breed is supposed to look like.

Spurs: this refers to a complete absence of spurs on adult males.

EL or Ear Lobe: this is used when the color of the bird’s ear lobe is not correct for the breed.

“White”: this word is used when there is positive white in feathers where it should not be.

HF or Hen Feathered: indicated a male bird that shows no characteristic male feathering for his breed (note that in some breeds the males are meant to be hen feathered.)

Owning and referring often to The Standard of Perfection is the key to making the right choices in your breeding pens. Like the GPS in your car alerting you on a wrong turn, the Standard of Perfection lets you know if you are taking the right path to success with your flock.

If you have received one of these notes on your coop tag, then you have officially joined the club. Every exhibitor has had them. Consider it constructive criticism by the judge. You learn and then make corrections for the next time. We have all been there. The folks who have been breeding birds for 30 years are the one who really don’t want to see any notes on their tags !

This is not an exhaustive list, but should cover most of the things a judge might write on your cage card at a show. Best of luck to you all at your shows!

How to Read a Coop Tag At a Show

Your bird will fall into one of the Following Catagorys:

Bantam, Large Fowl, Water Fowl, Or Turkey

This space donates the Class

Each Breed Falls into a Class.
S.C.C. Stands for Single Comb Clean Leg.

The Breed is Recorded here

This is the Color of the Bird

This is the Sex of the Bird

Cock: is a Male over 1 year of age
Hen is a Female over 1 year of age
Cockerel is a Male under 1 year of age
Pullet is a Female under 1 year of age

This is your " Entry Number "

This Number is unique to each Exhibitor
Your Pre - Assigned Number is recorded here..
Some times this number is referred to as an " Exhibitor Number"

These Numbers are what the Judges uses to Record your score on the card.

Generally 1st through 3rd place is recorded. Larger Shows will some time place a bird to as many as 6 places
In this case the Judge has awared this bird a 1st Place. The " Comment" space is reserved for the judge.
He or She may wish to leave a note for the exhibitor. Good traits as well as undesireable traits may be noted
In this case the Exhibitor has won Best of Breed which is recored as BB on the tag

BB Stands for Best of Breed, RB Stands for Reserve of Breed
BV Stands for Best of Veriety, RV Stands for Reserve of Variety
DQ Stands for Disqualified

→ If you have Any Questions Please ask one of your fellow exhibitors !
They will be happy to help you.



Please respect the judging and hold any questions for the judge until they are finished with their work
It is considered very rude to interrupt or interfere with the judge during judging

Example Entry Form Below

Waterfowl	Large Fowl	Double coop	Bantam	Bearded	Breed and Variety <i>Specify Bearded or NonBearded for all Silkies</i>	Cock	Hen	Cockerel	Pullet	Young Trio	Old Trio	Display	Jr. Dept.
			X		Cochin, White		2	1	2				
			X		Cochin, Black	2			1				
			X	X	Silkie, Bearded, White		2						
			X		Silkie, Non Bearded Black			1					
	X				Plymouth Rock, White				1				
X					Call, Grey	1							

Junior showmanship (circle one) Novice Junior Intermediate Senior

Number of single birds: 13 # @ at \$3.50 per bird **45.00**
