

Poultry Handbook

Judging Exterior Egg Quality

In poultry judging contests, eggs are assigned grades of A, B or Dirty according to USDA Standards. Grades AA and A have identical exterior quality standards. Contestants should not be too harsh in assigning a grade to eggs that have minor defects. The factors affecting exterior quality of eggs are:

- T** Cleanliness
- T** Egg shape
- T** Shell texture
- T** Ridges
- T** Shell thickness
- T** Body checks

You will be evaluating only the exposed surface of the egg. The underside of the egg should be considered free from defects. Evaluate only what you see.

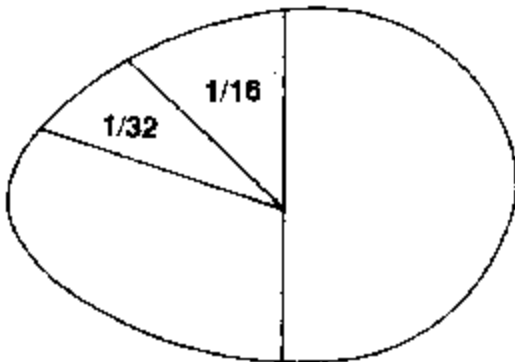
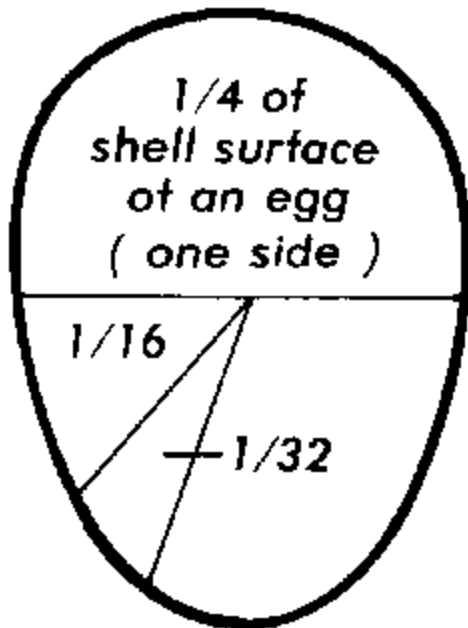
Students in a poultry judging contest will be required to determine the exterior quality of each egg in this class after viewing the exposed shell of each egg. Eggs in this class are laid horizontally on egg flats, and the eggs are not to be handled. The eggs are to be viewed at the same distance as is used for reading.

Students should follow a systematic order in evaluating the quality factors (cleanness, shape, and texture) for eggs. A discussion of these factors is given in this section. A final grade of either A Quality, B Quality, or Dirty is determined for each egg based upon these factors. A "Summary of Specifications for Standards of Exterior Quality for Individual Shell Eggs" is given in the following Table.

SUMMARY OF STANDARDS OF EXTERIOR QUALITY OF EGGS* (Minimum Requirements and Maximum Defects Permitted)			
FACTOR	AA & A QUALITY	B QUALITY	DIRTY
STAINS	Clean; may show small specks, stains, or cage marks not detracting from generally clean appearance; traces of processing oil.	Slight or moderate localized stains covering less than 1/32 of shell or scattered stains covering less than 1/16 of shell.	Prominent stains; Moderate stains covering more than 1/32 if localized and 1/16 of shell scattered.
ADHERING DIRT OR FOREIGN MATERIAL	None	None	Adhering dirt or foreign material
SHELL SHAPE	Approximately the usual shape.	Unusual or very misshapen (round, long, pointed, etc.)	
SHELL TEXTURE	May have rough areas that do not affect the shell shape or strength; small scattered calcium deposits & pimples	Extremely rough areas that may be faulty in strength; May have large calcium deposits & pimples.	
BODY CHECKS	Slight ridges that do not materially affect shape or strength.	May have pronounced ridges.	
SHELL THICKNESS	Free from thin spots.	Pronounced thin spots.	

Stains

- Grade A eggs must be clean. These eggs can show traces of processing oil (used to preserve freshness). This processing oil may give a shiny or opaque appearance.
- Eggs with slight stains, or moderate stains covering less than 1/32 of the shell, if the stain occurs in one localized area, or 1/16 of the shell surface, if the stains are scattered, are assigned Grade B.
- Eggs with adhering dirt or foreign material are also classified as dirty.
- Contestants will be evaluating only the exposed surface of the egg. The underside of the egg should be considered free from defects. Evaluate only what you see.



Adhering Dirt or Foreign Material

- Grade A and B eggs cannot have any adhering dirt or foreign material. Eggs with adhering material larger than a speck should be classified as Dirty. Small specks of dust or lint that may have settled out of the air should not be considered.

Egg Shape

- There is a considerable range of egg shapes that could be considered "approximately the usual shape" or Grade A. Eggs that are perfectly spherical (round) or too long to fit in the egg carton should be graded B quality. B quality grade for egg shape will include eggs that are clearly misshapen or that have definite flat areas.

Shell Texture

- Eggs with faulty texture are much weaker in shell strength and may be broken during distribution. Eggs with many small calcium deposits (sand paper texture) or with very large calcium deposits should be assigned Grade B.
- A good rule of thumb is that if you were to pull your fingernail across a calcium deposit, and there would be a good size hole if it came off, it would be classified as Grade B. You need to use your imagination for this, however, since touching of the eggs is not permitted.

Ridges

- Ridges can result in weakened shells. Many eggs show small ridges and most of these should be classified as Grade A. Those eggs with large ridges are Grade B.

Shell Thickness

- The shell should appear thick enough to withstand reasonable handling without breaking. Grade A eggs must have thick shells with no thin spots. Thin shells or thin spots would be a Grade B. In all cases the shell must not be broken.

Body Checks

- A body check is an egg which looks like the shell is cracked, but is actually still intact. Body checks are eggs which are cracked when the shell is being formed in the hen's body and then partially calcified over before being laid. A body check is classified as Grade B.