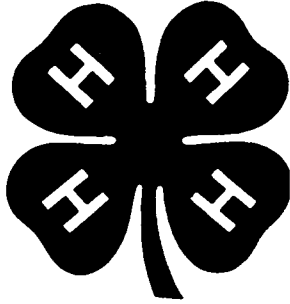
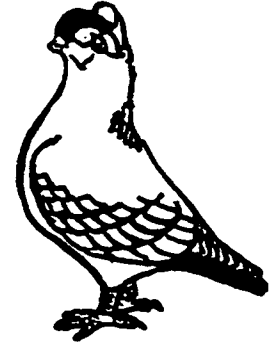


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# 4-H Pigeon Showmanship



When 4-H'ers exhibit pigeons from their pigeon project in 4-H shows, they sometimes have an opportunity to take part in a 4-H Pigeon Showmanship contest. In such an activity, the 4-H'er must present the pigeon and himself or herself to the judge in such a way as to show the bird to its best advantage.

## Prior to the Show

The 4-H'er should handle the pigeon quite regularly in the weeks prior to the show so that it is accustomed to him or her and is not afraid when picked up and moved about. The pigeon should be washed, if needed, prior to the show (early enough to be dry before the contest) and should have its toenails trimmed if necessary. These things are usually done at home before the bird is brought to show.

## At the Show

### Step 1. Taking the Pigeon from the Cage or Coop

A handler who is right-handed should reach into the cage with the right hand, moving slowly so as not to frighten the bird, and place the hand on the back of the bird, turning the bird so that its head is facing toward the door of the cage. Then slowly move the left hand under the bird so that the middle finger is between its legs and the index finger and two other fingers are on the outsides of the legs. The left thumb should extend up over the back of the bird to help hold the wings in place.

(Instructions for left-handed handlers are opposite.) The hand that holds the legs and wings will be referred to as the "grip" hand in the following description, and the other hand will be called the "free" hand.

With both hands on the pigeon, holding legs and wings still, remove it from the cage head first. (If you remove the pigeon tail first, you will probably break or tear its tail feathers in the process. Also, you will have less control of the bird if it tries to escape.)

### Step 2. Carrying the Pigeon to the Show Table

After the pigeon is removed from the cage, it should be carried to the show table with the same hand positions, but the bird should be tucked in toward the handler's body with the bird's head facing into the handler's left elbow-chest area (the right elbow-chest area, for left-handed handlers). The bird will feel secure there until moved.

### Step 3. Presenting the Pigeon to the Judge

The judge will ask each handler to present his or her pigeon in such a way as to show certain body parts or regions. Therefore, it is essential to know the terms for pigeon anatomy, including feather types, and to be able to point them out.

Diagrams of presentation techniques are shown on the back page of this publication.



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Note: The handler in the diagrams below is left-handed.

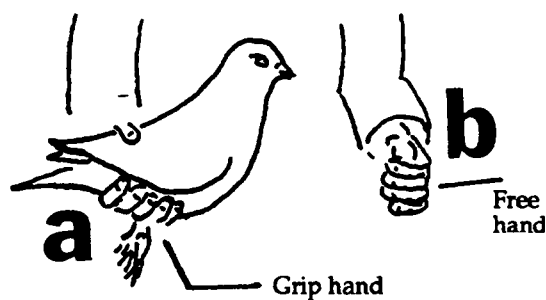


Diagram A

It is probable that the judge's first request will be to present your pigeon in profile. This can be done by bringing the pigeon out in front of you with your grip hand (a), removing your free hand (b) from the back of the pigeon. Your free hand (b) can be used to keep the pigeon's attention and to keep it alert by slight, catchy movements. (Movements should not distract the judge's attention from the bird, however.)

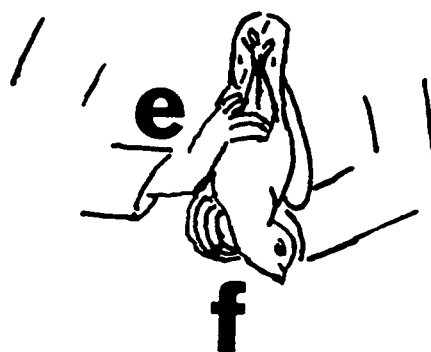


Diagram C

The keel and other body regions on the underside of the pigeon can be shown by turning the pigeon's head downward with your grip hand (e) and providing extra support with your free hand (f). In turning the pigeon's head downward, the axis of the pigeon's body should be perpendicular to the handler's body so that in the downward position the axes of pigeon and handler will be directly parallel.

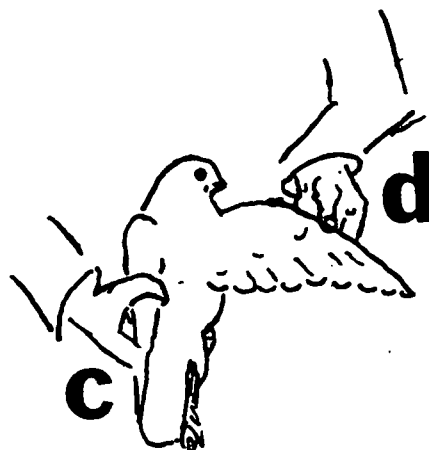


Diagram B

If the judge asks to see any of the wing feathers, turn the pigeon's head toward you with your grip hand (c) and spread one wing with your free hand (d).

Each pigeon showman will adapt his or her own variations of this technique based on individual experiences and preferences. However, things that are always standard for the handler in showmanship are:

- Be neat and clean.
- Be courteous to the judge and to other handlers.
- Be alert and keep an eye on the judge at all times.
- Accept the placement you earn in the contest like a good sport. Remember, there are no losers in a showmanship contest—some handlers just place higher than others.



This publication was prepared by John Mellott, former Extension agent, Multnomah County, Oregon State University.

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