



Getting Started with Show Broilers

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A broiler is a chicken bred specifically to grow muscle efficiently and be eaten. Raising broiler chickens is an excellent youth project for beginners to livestock exhibiting. Chickens are considerably easier to handle, require less space, and are less expensive than other species.

Advantages of starting with show broilers

- **Project is short term:** It typically takes only 6 weeks to raise a broiler to market weight.
- **Less feed:** A broiler chicken eats less than 2 pounds of feed for every pound of body weight gain. Therefore, a 6 pound broiler requires only 12 pounds of feed to complete its 6 week grow-out cycle.
- **Equal chance to succeed:** All chicks that students receive for a show are provided by a single hatchery. The chicks are the same breed and hatched on the same day. The birds are wing banded and randomly assigned to each student. This removes all bias in the selection of chicks and their assignment to the participants.
- **Chickens are easy to handle:** The birds are not intimidating and most youngsters can easily handle a 6 to 8 pound broiler.
- **Relatively low cost:** The chicks typically cost less than \$2 each. The cost of the project will depend on the number of birds that a student can house and care for; starting with 25 chicks costs less than \$50. Housing can also be fairly simple and inexpensive, especially if you keep the birds in an existing structure.
- **Requires little room:** Show birds can be raised in a backyard or a garage; they do not need a large amount of land.
- **Pen is lightweight:** Simple, inexpensive materials such as PVC pipe, nylon cable ties, and poultry netting can be used to construct a 10 foot by 10 foot broiler pen (Table 1). The pen must be housed in a shed or garage to protect the broilers from the elements.
- **Can be raised in town:** Broilers can often be raised in urban areas where larger animals would be impractical. In fact, it is recommended that broilers be raised indoors to maximize growth and prevent attack by predators. Many city ordinances and homeowners associations allow chickens for youth projects to be raised in town. Be sure to check with local laws

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and regulations before ordering chicks.

- **Provides meat:** Most livestock shows require entrants to bring a pen of three broilers, and most exhibitors also bring one or two alternates to the show. The remaining birds can be processed and eaten.
- **Cost benefit ratio:** A broiler chicken project costs little compared to the prize money a student can win. The investment and risk involved in a broiler project are much lower than for other animals.

For help with raising broilers for show, contact the local Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service county agent or an Agriculture science teacher.

Additional information is available at:

- <http://posc.tamu.edu/texas-agrilife-poultry-extension-specialists/youth-programs/>
- <https://agrilifebookstore.org/>

Table 1. Estimated cost of feed and materials for raising 25 broiler chicks for 6 weeks.

Description	Unit cost	Units	Total cost
Chicks	\$2 per chick	25	\$50.00
Feed	\$0.30 per lb	300	\$90.00
Hanging tube feeder	\$25 ea	2	\$50.00
Hanging waterer	\$25 ea	2	\$50.00
Infrared heat lamp	\$15 ea	2	\$30.00
Poultry netting	\$0.15 per sq ft	300	\$45.00
1 in. PVC tubing (Sch 40)	\$3.22 per 10 ft section	10	\$32.20
1 in. PVC tees (Sch 40)	\$0.56 each	8	\$4.48
1 in. PVC elbows (Sch 40)	\$0.44 each	16	\$7.04
Pipe glue	\$4.44 per 8 oz bottle	1	\$4.44
Nylon wire ties – 14 in.	\$12.09 per bag of 100	1	\$12.09
Nylon wire ties – 8 in.	\$13.46 per bag of 500	1	\$13.46
Box fans	\$15.96 per fan	2	\$31.92
Pine shavings	\$4.49 per bag	4	\$17.96
Plastic sheeting	\$9.98 per 10 ft x 25 ft roll	1	\$9.98
Total cost			\$448.57



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