

pelvic bones are fine and spread far apart. The point of the keel bone is pushed down on account of the enlarged abdomen. When the hen stops laying, the abdomen becomes smaller, the pelvic bones come closer together, and the whole body seems to contract. The size of the abdomen and distance between the pelvic bones will, of course, depend on the size of the hen and the size of the egg laid.

The vent of a laying hen is moist and flabby, showing a dilated condition, as compared with the small, hard puckered vent of a non-laying hen. A laying hen has a soft, loose skin, and the bones are readily felt. A non-laying hen is hard and plump, and the bones are not evident.

Color Changes A pullet coming into laying generally has a certain accumulation of fat beneath the skin. This is shown by the yellow color in the vent, legs, beak and eye-ring of the yellow skinned breeds, and also in the ear lobes of the white ear-lobed breeds. The amount of this yellow pigmentation present is a fairly good indication as to whether a bird is laying or not. A heavy laying hen is generally flesh color in face, beak and eye-ring, while a non-laying hen is distinctly yellow. The rate at which the yellow pigmentation disappears depends on the circulation, kind of feed and the amount of fat stored in the body.

If the hens consume large amounts of green feed or yellow corn only a very thin layer of fat is necessary to give a yellow color. Therefore, hens fed on free range do not bleach out nearly so quickly as those that are confined in pens, where they cannot obtain green food.

Vent—The first place that changes color is the vent. This change from yellow to flesh color takes place very rapidly. Therefore, a bird having a bleached or pink vent is likely to have laid for the past several weeks at least.

Eye-Ring and Earlobes—Next to the vent, the eye-ring will lose its yellow color. The earlobes in the Leghorns and Minorcas bleach out a little slower than the eye-ring.

Beak—The color goes out of the beak beginning at the base and gradually disappears until it leaves the point of the upper beak. The lower beak bleaches faster than the upper, but may be used as an indicator where the upper is horn colored or black. On an average yellow skinned bird, a bleached bill usually means heavy production for at least the past four or six weeks.

Shanks—The shanks bleach out much more slowly than the other parts and hence indicate a much longer period of laying. The yellow goes from scales on the front of the shanks first and finally from the scales on the rear. A bleached out shank usually indicates fairly heavy production for at least fifteen or twenty weeks. The yellow color comes back in the different parts in the same order as it went out, only that it returns much quicker than it goes out.