

How to Age your Rooster

Fall Populations: On average in any given fall, 80% of the roosters will be young of the year birds (< 1 year old). By December and January, young of the year roosters attain adult size. In wild populations, 2-5% of the population (hens or roosters) might live to 3 years or older. It is not possible to age a rooster as 2-year old vs 3-year old.

Aging a Rooster: Many hunters wonder if it's possible to age a fall harvested rooster. The answer is it depends. If the rooster was harvested prior to December 1 then, yes they can be aged with ~70-80% accuracy as young of the year (< 1 year old) or as adults (> 1 year old). If the rooster was harvested after December 1, there is no reliable way to age it accurately. The two methods for aging fall harvested roosters are Spur Length and the Bill Weight test.

Spur Length:

- If spurs are <3/4 inch prior to December 1 the rooster is likely a young of the year (< 1 yr old).
- If greater than 3/4inch the rooster is likely more than a year old.

**By December 1 some early hatched roosters have matured so that the spur method becomes unreliable.*



Bill Weight Test: *(quick method to determine if the bone in the bill is completely ossified)*

- Open the bill and hold the bird by the bottom portion of the bill, now bounce the bird.
- If the bird's weight makes the bill bend or break, it is likely a young of the year bird.
- If the bill does not bend or break, it is a rooster that is likely more than a year old.

**By December 1 some early hatched roosters have matured so that the bill method becomes unreliable.*

