chook run – (at a bowling club, golf club, etc.) a social competition in bowls, golf, etc., with frozen chickens etc. as prizes.

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We all recognise *chook* as an Australianism for *chicken*. The word comes from British dialect *chuck* (also appearing in the form *chookie*), where it was used as a ‘call to fowls’, and then as a word for ‘fowl, hen, chicken’. It became established in Australian English in the second half of the nineteenth century, though with a variety of spellings: *chuckey*, *chookie*, *choock*. The spelling *chook* had won out by about 1910.

The word is now so established in Australian English that anyone with the surname *Fowler* is likely to be nicknamed ‘*Chook*’ *Fowler*. The compound *chook raffle* was established by the 1960s as a term for a raffle, often in a pub, for which the prize was a ready-to-cook chicken. The idiom *he couldn’t run a chook raffle* came to be used as a comment on perceived incompetence, as in this recent letter to the editor in the *Daily Telegraph* (Sydney), 20 March 2009: ‘Senators Fielding and Xenophon, who were elected by a miniscule number of votes, parade around promoting themselves as saviours of the Australian people. I frankly would not employ them to run a chook raffle.’

A *chook house*, or *chook yard*, or *chook run* is a fenced-off area (often fenced in *chicken wire*) where domestic poultry are kept. But what do you make of the following *chook runs*?

Chook run plucks eagle. In a recent chook run at Belconnen, member Hamish Murray scored an eagle on the 480m par-five 17th. *Canberra Times*, 11 December 2008

Goondiwindi golfer Bonhomme, a regular in the Friday ‘chook run’ on the bush course four hours’ drive southwest of Brisbane, traded shots with heavyweights Allenby and Geoff Ogilvy early in the day. *Courier-Mail*, 14 December 2007

BOWLS Belconnen: chook run, mixed pairs, men, women, coaching 10 a.m. *Canberra Times*, 9 December 2006

Our bowlers suffered a surprise defeat at the hands of Kerang last Saturday. ... The chook run tonight will commence at 6 p.m. and names to John Hunter or Herbie Hehir no later than 5.30. *Pastoral Times*, 25 November 1988

This is clearly a new sense of *chook run*, which involves a competition (usually a shortened form of the usual competition) at a sporting club, for which the prize is much the same as that for a pub *chook raffle*—a ready-to-cook or frozen chicken.