Ostrich Feather Structure and Quality

There are many different types of Ostrich Feathers depending on the age of the bird, the sex of the bird and where they are positioned on the bird.

Figure 1 explains the following terms and illustrates various defects that may be present in an ostrich feather. A feather consists of a **Plume** (the larger part of the feather) and the **Quill** (the naked stalk at the bottom end of the feather).  A **Plume** consists of a **Shaft** (rachis) with branched **Barbs** on which **Barbules** are found.  Every **Barbule** has a **Base** and a **Pennulum**, on which minute spikelets (**Barbicels**) are found, which are called **Fila**, without the normal **Hooklets** (Pyecraft, 1898).  These **Hooklets** would normally hook onto the **Hooklets**of adjacent barbs’ **Barbules** to form a network in perching birds.  The bases of the barbules of all flightless birds are twisted.  A single **Barb**with **Barbules** is called a **Plumule**, and all the **Plumules** together is the **Flue**.  A single **Plume** has a **Butt**(at the point closest to the base) and a **Tip** (at the point furthest from the base).[1]



Figure 1: Ostrich Feather Drawing illustrating definitions, terminology and and some defects (compiled from Swart, 1979)