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*TURKEY RAISING
IN TEXAS*



Address

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To Members of Girl's Poultry Clubs:

The following bulletin on Turkeys has been prepared by Mr. F. W. Kazmeier, Poultry Husbandman of the Extension Service of the Agricultural and Mechanical College of Texas. We hope that by the careful study of it many girls and women will be able to raise and sell large flocks of turkeys at Thanksgiving and Christmas seasons, when prices are highest, and thereby show a splendid net profit on their year's work. Yours truly,

BERNICE CARTER,
State Agent in Charge Girls' Work.

TURKEYS.

The State of Texas is well adapted to the growing of turkeys. In some parts of the State they are kept in large flocks and herded like sheep. In order to do well they should be raised on fresh ground each year with plenty of land to roam over.

VARIETIES.—The most popular varieties are the Mammoth Bronze, Bourbon Red, and White Holland. The Bronze turkeys are the largest of all. The standard requirement for adult male is 36 pounds; for adult hen, 20 pounds. The Bourbon Red is a close second in size. Both are hardy and reasonably free from disease. The Bronze turkey is the wild turkey domesticated. The Bourbon Red turkey is supposed to have come from a cross of Bronze and mongrel buff stock. Some other varieties are the Slate and Buff, but neither is as extensively bred as the three first named varieties. The White Holland turkey is noted as a good layer and economical meat producer. White turkey feathers are worth more than colored turkey feathers.

BREEDING.—Do not practice inbreeding. Make it a practice to select only healthy, vigorous and medium sized birds for breeders. Buy new toms of unrelated stock each year and mate with the most vigorous of your turkey hens. As a rule, young turkeys do not make as good breeders as two-year-old turkeys. Keep the best of your early hatched specimens for breeders, and sell the late hatched specimens. Many turkey raisers make the serious mistake of doing just the reverse. Select birds whose breastbone is long and straight.

Allow your breeding stock free range. Turkeys can never be profitably kept in confinement. The poults from stock allowed unrestricted range are much stronger, easier to raise, and more profitable. Practically all of the most fatal turkey diseases are eliminated when they are kept on fresh ground each year. Keeping turkeys year after year on the same ground generally proves fatal.

FEEDING BREEDING STOCK.—During the winter feed very lightly and the food should not be of too fattening a nature. Corn should not be fed extensively, because it is too fattening. Feed a mixture of equal parts oats, milo or kafir, and barley or wheat. Some turkey raisers feed the oats boiled with good results. In the morning their feed should be rather scant, but at night they should be fed enough to fill their crops. Keep water, grit, oyster shells, and charcoal accessible at all times. Whenever any of them appear to go off feed cut down the amount at once until they are all eager for feed at feeding time.

Several weeks before turkeys begin to lay they should be well fed to get them in good condition. They should not be excessively

fat at breeding time, yet they must have some surplus fat. About the end of February add 15 per cent corn, milo or kafir to the regular ration and discontinue at end of laying season.

Turkeys begin to lay at about ten months of age. Sometimes it is possible to hasten laying by feeding forcing feeds, such as beef scrap, cotton seed meal, sunflower seed and oats. Turkeys lay in "periods," in spring and mid-summer. One mating, as a rule, is sufficient to fertilize a whole litter of eggs. Many successful turkey raisers keep the gobbler away from the hens during laying time, especially in the morning.

As a rule turkeys are mated in the proportion of one male to eight or ten turkey hens. Some breeders mate as many as ten with one tom and get good results. The toms should be fully matured and constitutionally strong. When green food is not accessible, provide it. Keep turkeys as near to natural condition as possible.

HOUSING.—Turkeys do not need expensive houses. During pleasant weather they do well roosting in trees. All they need in bad weather is a shelter from rain, snow and strong cold winds. Provide this by making a shed with the sides enclosed with hog fencing, which provides ideal conditions. Equip this shelter with round and strong roosting poles, water dish, grit, and shell hopper, and a box for charcoal. Turkeys must have plenty of fresh air and sunshine. But, like chickens, they cannot stand the least draft at night without catching cold, which, if the specific germ should be present, will develop into that deadly disease, roup.

It is good practice to have the turkeys roost in trees or buildings near the home. In this way you are not so likely to have trouble in training them to come home at night. Feed in the evening on a clean feeding board near the roosting place. The turkey is naturally a wild and roaming bird, and hence requires more attention than chickens to keep them near home.

HATCHING.—Turkeys like to lay in secluded places, and as soon as they find that you know the location of their nests they will hunt for another place to lay. Therefore, it is advisable to gather the eggs when the turkeys are not around. For nests, we know nothing better than common salt barrels with one end removed and laid on the side. Cover with a little brush to make them look more natural and secluded. Quite often barrels do not appeal to them; in such cases it is advisable to allow them to choose their own nests. It is a good practice to set the first hatch under a hen or in an incubator, instead of allowing the turkeys to hatch them. This will make them lay twice as many eggs. It is good practice to allow the turkey hen to hatch the last batch of eggs.

Early in the spring it is important that the eggs be gathered as soon after laying as possible to prevent them getting chilled. Turkeys lay early in the morning. Skunks and crows are great thieves of turkey eggs.

The turkey hen shows that she wants to set by remaining on the nest. Setting turkey hens should be left alone as much as possible, and always attended to by the same person. They will not stand for too much fussing. At hatching time allow the poults to run with the mother hens. When common hens are used to hatch turkey eggs it is good practice to set several at the same time and give the poults to a turkey hen that has just become broody. A turkey hen can take care of 18 to 20 eggs at one time.

REARING.—A good turkey hen will brood 20 to 25 young ones. For the first few days feed young turkeys on bread soaked in milk and squeezed dry, then feed a mixture of bran, corn meal, and wheat middlings slightly moistened but not sloppy.

A good method of feeding young turkeys is as follows: For the first few days feed often and little at a time of rolled oats or pin-head oatmeal and sour milk (clabber). When large enough, feed the hard grains, corn, kafir, or milo, the same as for mature stock. If in confinement feed some green feed and finely cut cooked meat. Some people, to teach poults how to eat, keep a few chicks with them.

The turkey hen with the poults should be placed in an A-shaped coop, high enough to permit her to stand erect. The coop should be placed in a large pasture where turkeys have never been raised before. The turkey hen should be confined in the coop for the first month, and the young turkeys allowed free range from the start. If the hen is bound to roam too much when given free range, it is advisable to tie a weight to one of her legs. The coop should be moved to fresh ground each day. Everything in and about the coop should be kept scrupulously clean and well disinfected. Young turkeys appear to do better on grasshoppers, insects, grass, free range, pin-head oatmeal, and clabber than on anything else you can feed.

Turkeys are very hardy when fully developed but very delicate when young. During the first few days keep them out of cold, rain, hot sun, or tall wet grass. Direct, hot sunshine is sometimes injurious, but moderate warmth as found in the shade, or moderate sunshine is beneficial to the poults. Keep turkeys on dry ground.

Young turkeys are very likely to have lice, especially head lice. If they appear weak and lifeless at two weeks of age, they are likely to have lice. Anoint them, head, throat, and vent, with carbolated vaseline. If hens are used for mothers, dust these before and while setting with a good lice powder, being careful not to use too much.

Some turkey growers start their poults off on coarsely ground corn, milo, or kafir, mixed with sour milk, just enough to make it moist and crumbly. As the poults grow older, they gradually work them off on cracked corn, kafir, or milo, and finally on whole corn. The serious objection to this is the danger that comes from over feeding a too fattening ration. This ration could be improved by adding bran and bread crumbs and middlings.

SHOOTING THE RED.—The part of head commonly known as “caruncles” and fleshy parts surrounding lower part of head and throat commences to develop at the age of about two months. At this time they should receive special attention because it is a very critical time. It takes about three weeks to complete “shooting the red.” During this time it is very important to keep them out of the wet and cold and to feed them well on some stimulating food, such as chopped onions or lettuce. A little pepper in the drinking water is good. Some breeders give a little sulphate of iron in the drinking water at this time.

FATTENING.—The fattening of turkeys, as a rule, can only be done profitably late in fall when the weather is cold and insect life is scarce. They will then cease roaming about so much and the cold weather will increase their appetite. Many successful turkey fatteners simply increase the feeding of corn, and during the last week or ten days feed all the corn they will consume.

Another good fattening ration for turkeys is equal parts of ground oats, corn and buckwheat, moistened with sour milk. Do not over feed. Provide grit and charcoal. Mashed cooked potatoes are good.

As a rule it is not practicable to fatten turkeys in close confinement. To fatten properly requires about six weeks.

KILLING FOR MARKET.—When ready to kill and dress turkeys be sure that they have had no food for 36 hours. Suspend the turkey by a loop around its legs to a hook on the wall or ceiling. With a pointed, sharp two-edged knife, give a quick thrust through the roof of the mouth into the brain and sever the main arteries by two light cuts. The next instant begin plucking the feathers. Do not cut the skin at any place, nor remove any of the interior organs so that the outside air can get to the inside, because as soon as the interior is exposed to the air, decomposition sets in.

FENCING TURKEYS.—In neighborhoods where turkeys are a great nuisance to neighbors, it is sometimes advisable to clip their wings and place them in a large fenced lot. Where many are raised, it is a good plan to thus fence in a large orchard, say 10 acres, with a woven wire fence and turn them loose in there. This method is advisable in closely settled neighborhoods.

PARASITES.—Watch young turkeys for lice. To kill lice on mature turkeys, take blue ointment (mercurial ointment 33 per cent) about the size of a kernel of corn, divide this in three parts, and rub on the skin under the rump, wings, and groin. Small grey lice on the heads of mature turkeys may be killed by rubbing affected parts with sweet oil.

BLACK-HEAD.—Where this disease is very common, it is, as a general rule, best to raise chickens instead of turkeys. Black-head, as far as we know at present, is incurable. In some turkey

sections of the State this disease, for some reason, does not appear to flourish. To prevent black-head, raise young poults on fresh ground each year. Allow free range. Disinfect the roosting place and droppings occasionally with chloride of lime.

Turkeys with black-head are inactive, listless, found to separate themselves from the rest of the flock, and can often be noticed standing around with drooping tail and wings. The droppings appear thin, light in color, frothy, full of yellow and sometimes greenish streaks. The voidings are frequent.

Remember, strong stock is not so likely to contract this disease. The disease germ is easier killed by disinfecting before it has entered the host than by drugs after it has entered. Keep the surroundings and feeding utensils scrupulously clean and well and regularly disinfected. Isolate all sick birds as soon as discovered, and give two teaspoonsful of muriatic acid in a quart of drinking water, preferably in an earthenware vessel.

Young turkeys are sometimes troubled with common diarrhoea, which is frequently caused by over feeding highly concentrated foods, or by dampness, cold filth, lice, and hot sunshine. Remove the cause, and feed some boiled rice. Provide plenty of charcoal. If feeding wheat bran, change to shorts or wheat middlings. Sometimes it is good practice to sprinkle the food liberally with cayenne pepper.