

Turkeys Raised Survey Information Sheet

Overview

Due to years of careful selective breeding, the modern turkey produces more meat per pound of feed and in less time than most other domestic meat producing animals. Turkeys are bred to have more breast meat and meatier thighs.

The turkeys raised survey is looking at young turkeys intended for meat production as well as breeder turkeys reaching maturity. The main points of data that are being looked at are: pounds produced, price per pound and value of production for the major turkey states and for the United States.

Terms and Definitions

Beard – A black lock of hair found on the chest of a male turkey.

Breed Designations – Light breed or fryer-roasted turkeys are generally marketed between 5 and 10 pounds live weight; heavy breed turkeys normally exceed 12 pounds live weight.

Breeder Hen – Mature hens to be used for fertile egg production to supply the hatchery. To maintain production continuity, laying turkey hens are artificially inseminated. The use of light induces them to lay at optimum times. During a 25 week laying cycle a hen normally lays 80-100 eggs. At the end of the cycle, the hen is “spent” and is usually slaughtered.

Brooder – Temperature controlled facilities where brooding stoves, hanging from the ceiling, radiate heat down onto the poults keeping them warm. Feeders and waters are placed close to the heat. At 5-6 weeks of age, the poults are moved to “grow out” facilities.

Caruncle – A red-pink fleshy growth on the head and upper neck of a turkey.

Death Loss – Turkeys that die due to disease, natural causes, or catastrophe before reaching market weights.

Eggs – Turkey eggs are tan with brown speck and are larger than chicken eggs.

Flock – A large group of turkeys.

Hen – Female turkey.

Incubation Period – The period of time required for a turkey egg to hatch is 28 days.

Poult – Baby turkey; normally tan and brown.

Poults Placed – Poults placed on farms in all states for meat production or breeding. Poults exported or die en route to farms are excluded while extras supplied by hatcheries are included.

Snood – A long, red, fleshy growth from the base of the beak that hangs down over the beak.

Started Poult – Some producers prefer to purchase poults at approximately 2 months of age. The intensive care of poults during the brooding period is thus left to specialists.

Tom – A male turkey.

Turkeys Raised – For our purposes, turkeys grown to maturity. A hen usually takes 14-16 weeks to reach a slaughter weight of 15 pounds, and a tom 16-19 weeks to reach market weight of 30-35 pounds. Maturity for breeding purposes is generally considered 5 months of age. Hens are processed and usually

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sold as whole birds, while toms are further processed into products such as cutlets, tenderloins, turkey sausage, turkey franks, and turkey deli meats.

Wattle – A bright red appendage at the neck.

Things to Watch Out For

- If turkeys were previously owned and raised by contractees, but are not raised by contractees now.
- No poults being placed in their home state.
- Death loss is outside the 5-20% range.
- Poults placed is unequal to total reported.