

Raising Turkeys on the Farm

A great many farmers' wives raise a few turkeys every year, and for the amount of work, time and cost of raising, taking everything into consideration, I believe it pays well. I will tell from my own experience how I raised turkeys on the farm "back east" at the old home.

We kept four hen turkeys, keeping the hens if they were good layers and mothers, until they were three or four years old. Usually getting a fine young gobbler from some other flock, as turkeys will soon be inferior in size and strength if they are inbred. Our turkeys were fed with the laying chickens through the winter, also roosted in the same house, but this is not a good idea to have them roost together, as they will fight the chickens, but they need a good shelter to roost under. They usually begin laying in April and average seventeen or eighteen eggs each. As soon as they would go setting we gave them generally seventeen eggs each. Never try to raise young turkeys with chickens for mothers. We made them a good nest and if they had to be moved from their nest in which they laid, they were set in a box so they could be shut up a few days. They were let off every day for feed and water. Always give whole grain while sitting. Sometimes a few days before hatching, the eggs were dampened with warm water. When they are all hatched and about twenty-four hours old they were taken off the nest and taken to a small yard which we usually made of three boards a foot wide, and ten to twelve feet long, on some clean, dry place or on short green grass, partly in the shade. We fed curd made of sour milk, of which there is plenty on the farm.

They were fed about five times a day for the first week and after that three times. When about two weeks old oat meal and barley meal or corn meal were added with the milk curd. We had to furnish them grit and used broken crockery, pounding fine and fed twice a week. At night they were put in a clean coop with a board floor with the mother turkey. Our turkeys were never wild and so they were easily handled. After a few days old they were allowed to run out after the dew is off the grass. But it is better to watch them the first day as some turkeys will wander away and hide when night comes. As they were all hatched about the same time they were all put together in a large coop when the young poults were about three or four weeks old, so that they will run in one flock the rest of the summer. The old gobbler is put with the others and excepting rare instances will hover the young and fight enemies as hawks, etc., the same as the mother hen. They were given the whole range of the farm for insects and the stubble fields. We gave them regularly a morning and night feed of the ground grains mixed with skim-milk after about half grown. We would have to drive them up at night until about two months old, after that they would go up themselves and often before that age.

Whenever we saw a thunder shower threatening, our first thought was to gather the turkeys under shelter. If left out in a hard shower they easily drown, even after feathered, and during long rains they were kept in some unused part of the barn or other building. Often in July and August the old hens would go to laying again and still run with the flock, thus furnishing us with eggs for cooking purposes the rest of the summer. About the middle of September we began feeding them for the market. Usually fed corn exclusively, but sometimes would feed small potatoes cooked and mashed with corn meal, fed warm. They were always fed all they would eat but had their liberty, never shutting up until the day before killing. They were dressed in the best possible manner and sent to a city market a few days before Thanksgiving Day, and I never remember getting a low price. We kept no pure breed. I think a medium-sized turkey sells better and will be full grown and plump, while the extra large take longer to mature and if dressed before fully grown often show pin feathers. Since coming to Texas I have had to make some changes in the raising of turkeys. They do not require so much to be fed them, as they pick up most of their living after half-grown.

And when young the lice and mites will bother if not careful. We also sell them alive.—*Mrs. A. W. Trumble, in Practical Farmer.*

Importance of Good Sires

By Prof. Davenport, at National Horse Breeders' Meeting

I would emphasize the importance of good sires. These mares will not be purely bred animals; they would be too expensive. They will be simply good, vigorous specimens, capable of giving plenty of milk. The quality must come from the sire, where quality means most, because one animal can impart it to so many. Such associations as these can render the horse interests a valuable service by using every influence to hasten the day of stallion inspection and license here in America. This farmer we are considering is not a horseman, that is, is not able to detect the slighter faults of animals. The hock may be slightly too narrow, or the leg a little crooked, or the bone not quite flat enough, or the loin a little light, and he will not be able to detect it. I know a farmer who considers himself something of a horseman who yet did not notice a hind leg of a colt so poor at the hock that it was certain to go to pieces. I know a part-bred Percheron stallion that is considered a great horse with the farmers because he takes fat like a hog and has a heavy, arching neck, but his sickle hock gives him a leg so bent as to entirely disqualify him in the eye of even a fair judge. So do other parts escape the notice of a class of good men who are not at all ignorant, but whose information and expert knowledge lie along other lines.

The inspector and the law should help them out. As it is now, the owner of a strictly first-class, well-bred and registered stallion has no chance out over the country as compared with the owner of a part bred horse that will fatten readily, and that, costing but a fraction of the other, can be stood for perhaps only two or three dollars less and get all the custom. This compels the owner of the good stallion to cut prices to a point where, in order to secure decent returns, so much service is taken as to render next to worthless a large share of the colts gotten. We shall produce plenty of scalawag horses until the part-bred stallion is driven out of business, and that will be done only by a system of inspection. It costs as much to raise a poor horse as it does a good one. The deficient hock or line is not a thing that takes less feed. It is no element of cheapness until it comes before the old horseman in the great markets, and the general horse-raiser must be insured against his own foolishness in this matter by a thorough system of inspection. Until that time comes the great breeders and improvers of horses will be subject to a ruinous competition from part-bred stallions.

The system that has been in vogue has produced some good horses, but it has produced a good many more poor ones. The horse is a highly developed animal, and all his parts are developed far beyond their natural state. If, in a given individual, one part is not fully developed it cannot stand the strain put upon it by the other and better developed parts, and it is with a horse as a chain, or a tile drain, the whole is no better than the poorest spot. What a mixed and heterogeneous mass of horseflesh we have been guilty of producing! And yet the stallioner and the law are more in blame than the farmer.

The horse-raiser should fix his mind definitely upon the class of horses that he proposes to produce, choose his stallion accordingly and depend upon him for that quality that always distinguishes the excellent from the ordinary. He should never, sleeping or waking, forget his own limitations, but remember that while the professional horseman must produce the breeder, the racer, and the phenomenal individuals out of the best material of the world, yet that the production of the great mass of commercial horses out of common mares and by approved sires is his own peculiar field, in which good profits can always be realized, if the farmer keeps his head and does not produce worthless stuff. Cheap horses are recruited with sufficient rapidity from the ranks above, both by age and accident, and we cannot afford to grow them as a business.