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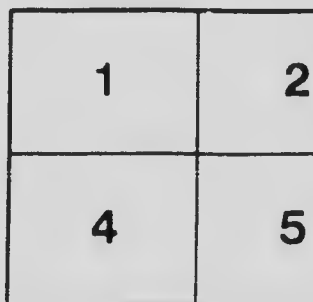
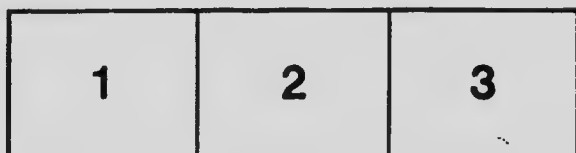
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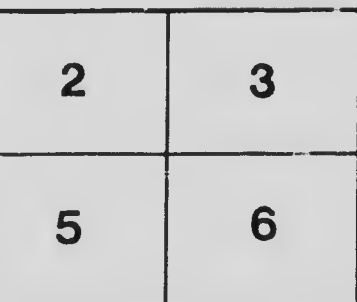
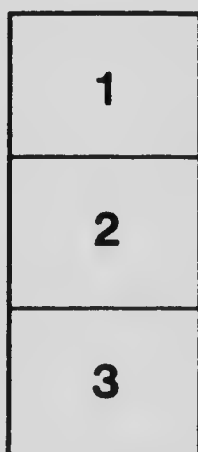
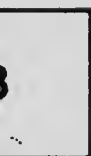
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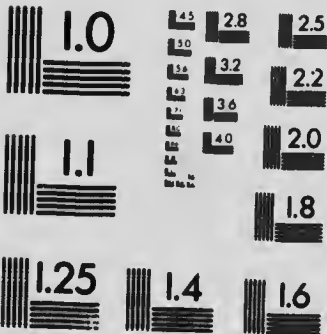
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DOMINION OF CANADA.  
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE.

## EXPERIMENTAL FARMS.

J. H. GRISDALE, B. Agr.,  
Director.

F. C. ELFORD,  
Dominion Poultry Husbandman.

### POULTRY DIVISION.

# The Management of Turkeys,

BY

VICTOR FORTIER, Assistant.

Turkey raising is rather difficult, and breeders are not all successful.

Farmers who have pastures on dry soil, rather poor for live stock, are well situated for rearing turkeys. It is also very desirable to have a wood lot near the pasture, provided of course that there are no beasts of prey in the neighbourhood.

**BREEDING BIRDS.**—The best specimens should always be selected for breeding purposes. Birds two or three years old are the most suitable. The male turkey is not fully grown before two years. Turkey hens give fairly good results when about twelve months old. Care should always be taken to select birds whose breastbone is long and straight, as such birds will carry a large quantity of meat on the breast.

A good ration for breeding turkeys is the following: boiled oats with a little corn, oats or buckwheat distributed in sufficient quantity. Breeding birds must be in good condition but not too fat.

**LAYING AND INCUBATION.**—The turkey begins to lay at about ten months of age. The laying time may be somewhat hastened by giving stimulating food such as sunflower seed and mash, to which a little beef scrap is added. There are usually two laying periods during the year, at spring and mid-summer. One mating is sufficient to fertilize a whole litter of eggs and one male is sufficient for ten females. At laying time, the male should be kept away from the females, at least in the morning, as he often drives them from the nest, beats them and breaks their eggs.

The turkey-hen shows that she wants to sit by remaining a little longer than usual on her nest. The nest is prepared on the ground with straw or hay. Sitters should be placed so that they cannot see one another. Turkeys like to lay "away" when they are allowed range; they usually make their nests in thickets. It is very hard at times to make them lay in a suitable place; a good plan when laying begins; is to keep them in a dark and quiet room until noon, if they are not disturbed after laying a few eggs they will return to the place themselves.

When the turkey-hen is "sitting" she should always be attended to by the same person. The visit of a stranger may spoil the chances of success. If the eggs have been removed one by one as laying progresses, an artificial nest should be set up in a secluded and dry place. The number of eggs laid is generally about twenty; some turkeys lay as many as fifty or even more in a season. One female may hatch as many as twenty-five eggs at a time. The mother should be placed carefully on the eggs and

kept in place for a few moments. The poults hatch out after twenty-eight or thirty days; during this time the turkeys may not leave the eggs unless one takes them off to make them eat.

**REARING POULTS.**—A turkey-hen may take care of twenty-five young ones; it is well at this time to remove the male from the young birds as some tom-turkeys have an ugly disposition and soon destroy a whole flock. Although extremely hardy when fully developed turkeys are very delicate and frail until they are two months old. During the first few days they are in danger from cold, rain, dew or hot sun any of which may prove fatal. When they are about a month old, they may be let out with their mother in fine weather but care should be taken to keep them in a very dry place and to provide small shelters where they can be under the shade without being deprived of the heat of the sun. The direct hot sun is very injurious but moderate sunshine or moderate heat under the shade is good for the poults. The young should be carefully protected from the attacks of parasites (see Parasites). If there is no natural place at hand, they should be provided with a heap of sand or dry earth where they may take a dust bath at will.

**FEEDING.**—It is sometimes necessary to feed the young by hand as they cannot eat like chicks. A good plan is to keep a few chicks among them, just to show them how to eat. Later on they eat like gluttons. They should be well fed during the first days but should only receive a little food at a time. They should never be heard, as they only cry when hungry. They should have regularly from four to six meals a day until six weeks old.

For the first few days the feed of young birds may consist of a semi-dry mash made of hard boiled eggs, boiled rice, greens, etc., the whole being cut fine and mixed with bread crumbs, bran or oat meal, stirred in milk. This feed is first given to them in the hollow of the hand and later on small boards or flat surfaces. After the fifth day the eggs and bread are gradually suppressed and onion tops, nettle leaves, tender grasses, chopped lettuce, bran, shorts, low grade flour, barley or boiled oats, added to the ration. The feed is given as a mash, mixed fairly dry with whey or curdled milk.

Pure water or water with a little sulphate of iron may be used for drinking. When the young look sick, a little ginger may be given with the water.

**"SHOOTING THE RED".**—The caruncles and fleshy part which surround the lower part of the head and throat develop at the age of two months. This is a critical time during the life of the young bird. It lasts from two to three weeks and often a number of birds die. It is absolutely necessary that they should be kept warm during this time, in a place dry and free from draughts. They should also be liberally fed on stimulating food: nettle mash with ground hemp seed, meal and finely chopped onions. It is well to add a little salt, pepper, parsley and even raw garlic; they may receive at times a little warm wine with cinnamon added to it or some similar stimulant.

The following formula is recommended for this period. All the ingredients should be ground to a fine powder: china cinnamon, 15 grams; ginger, 60 grams; gentian, 5 grams; iron carbonate, 25 grams. It should be given about fifteen days before "Shooting the Red," at the rate of a teaspoonful for ten young ones; it should be added to the mash morning and night. When this critical stage is passed; the poults are extremely hardy. They can be allowed to run at large but care should be taken to keep them away from certain plants such as digitalis, benbane and hemlock all of which are deadly poisons to them.

**ADULT TURKEYS.**—Turkeys do not require an expensive house; indeed, when the period of "Shooting the Red" is over, they prefer to sleep in the open. Under such conditions they are far healthier than when they are closed in small poorly ventilated buildings.

Roosts should be put up in the yard, under large trees or where they will be protected from the wind. Large tree limbs may be used for the purpose or ordinary roosts, wide and flat. Turkeys, like hens, always seek the highest spot on the roosts and some even use an old waggon wheel for a roost. This wheel should be placed horizontally, at a height of about nine feet, and kept in place by a post passing through the hub and firmly stuck in the ground. Some sort of a ladder should be put up to enable the turkeys to climb. The spokes of the wheel being all at the same level the turkeys all feel equal, and do not indulge in useless fighting.

Turkeys require plenty of air and space. A shed closed in on three sides is sufficient in summer. In winter, a house similar to a cotton front poultry house is quite suitable. The house should be disinfected with chlorine of lime occasionally.

During the day the turkeys roam in the meadows or around the farm and gather most of their food, consisting of insects of all kinds and fruit picked up along the hedges; they are especially fond of blueberries. In the fall, they eat acorns with avidity.

Turkeys generally come home to roost after sunset, specially if some





supplementary food is given to them in the shape of meal or mash in the morning, before they go out, and at night when they come back. It is a bad plan to let the turkeys pick up all their food as the greatest profit cannot be derived unless the birds increase rapidly in weight and this can only be attained by giving the birds a full ration.

**FATTENING.**—Fattening is a very simple operation which increases the value of the birds as it increases their weight and improves the quality of the flesh. Turkeys that have been well fed may be fattened at about six or seven months old, when cold weather sets in. Restrict their run at first so that they may get used, gradually, to live in a small yard or in a small house, although large enough for them to take a little exercise. It should never be forgotten that turkeys are of a roving nature and that a complete seclusion does not agree with them.

Fattening takes about six weeks. During the first month it will be sufficient to give a ration composed of grain or mash not too thick nor too thin. They should get as much of it as they like; only a quantity sufficient for one meal should be prepared in advance. Oats, barley and corn meal may enter in large proportion in the composition of this ration. Cooked mashed potatoes, mixed with milk, will help to produce a white flesh.

Turkeys may also be fattened with good grain distributed twice a day, morning and evening, and one meal of mash at noon or twice a day and a little grain at noon.

It is important to mix with the mash a little fine gravel and always keep fresh water before them. Towards the end of the fattening period, grease or scraps of cooked meat may be added to the ration.

Male turkeys do not fatten so easily as the females nor is the meat so tender; but they become larger.

**PARASITES.**—Young turkeys suffer greatly from lice and mites. A good way to keep them free from them is to take care of the mother before the young are hatched. Dust the plumage of the turkey-hen at nights with a good insecticide powder, put it close to the skin, the head, the joints of the legs; care should be taken not to put any over the eyes. Also put on the skin a little blue ointment, about as much as a grain of barley, divided in three or four parts, under the rump, the wings and the groin.

Some lice are hard to see because they are grey. They can be destroyed by lightly rubbing the head and throat with a small quantity of sweet oil.

**DIARRHEA.**—Diarrhea is caused, in the majority of cases, by dampness, dirt or vermin. The best remedy is to remove the cause. Boiled rice and a small quantity of charcoal give good results. It is also recommended to give two parts of ginger, cinnamon, cloves, cayenne pepper, the whole well mixed with a mash in the proportion of a teaspoonful for a dozen poults. Double the dose when the young turkeys are four or five weeks old.

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Issued by direction of the Honourable Martin Burrell, Minister of Agriculture, Ottawa.



