

Guide to House Feeding, Raising, and Taking Proper Care of Turkeys

Turkeys are a popular poultry choice for homesteaders and small farmers due to their meat and egg production capabilities. While they can be raised on pasture, providing them with a house for shelter and protection is essential for their well-being and productivity. This comprehensive guide will provide you with all the necessary information to successfully house feed, raise, and care for turkeys.

Housing Requirements

The size and design of the turkey house will depend on the number of birds you intend to raise. Generally, it should provide each bird with approximately 2.5-3 square feet of floor space. The house should be well-ventilated, with an adequate supply of fresh air to prevent respiratory problems. Natural ventilation through windows and vents is ideal, but mechanical ventilation may be necessary in larger houses.



RAISING TURKEYS: A Guide To House, Feeding, Raising And Taking Proper Care Of Turkeys by Jessie Ash

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The floor should be covered with a deep layer of litter material. Wood chips, straw, or shavings are all suitable options and will help absorb moisture and provide insulation. The litter should be kept dry and changed regularly to prevent disease outbreaks.

Perches

Turkeys are roosting birds and require perches to rest and sleep on. Perches should be placed at least 2 feet off the ground and spaced approximately 12 inches apart. The perches should be wide enough to accommodate the birds' feet comfortably.

Nesting Boxes

Turkeys typically lay their eggs in the early morning. Provide one nesting box for every 4-5 hens. The nesting boxes should be private, clean, and filled with soft bedding material.

Feeding

Turkeys are omnivorous and will consume a variety of feedstuffs, including grain, grasses, insects, and kitchen scraps. A balanced diet is essential for optimal growth and production.

Starter feed

Turkeys require a high-protein starter feed for the first 8-12 weeks of life. This feed should contain approximately 28% protein.

Grower feed

After 12 weeks of age, turkeys can be switched to a grower feed. This feed should contain approximately 18% protein.

Finisher feed

Turkeys that are being raised for meat production should be fed a finisher feed for the last 4-6 weeks before slaughter. This feed should contain approximately 16% protein.

In addition to commercial feed, turkeys can also benefit from access to pasture or range. This allows them to supplement their diet with fresh grasses, insects, and other nutrients.

Water

Turkeys require a constant supply of fresh, clean water. Provide waterers that are accessible to all birds and clean them regularly to prevent the spread of disease.

Health and Care

Turkeys are generally hardy birds, but they can be susceptible to various health problems. Proper care and management are essential to prevent disease outbreaks and ensure the well-being of your flock.

Vaccination

Turkeys should be vaccinated against common diseases, such as Marek's disease, Newcastle disease, and fowl pox. Consult with your veterinarian to determine the appropriate vaccination schedule for your flock.

Parasite control

Turkeys can be affected by internal and external parasites, such as worms, mites, and lice. Regular deworming and external parasite control measures are necessary to prevent health problems.

Disease prevention

Maintaining a clean and sanitary environment is the best way to prevent disease outbreaks. Keep the turkey house clean, change litter regularly, and isolate sick birds immediately.

Handling

Turkeys are large, powerful birds and should be handled with care. Avoid chasing or grabbing birds by their wings or legs. Instead, gently pick them up by their body, supporting their weight with your arms.

Breeding

If you plan to raise turkeys for breeding purposes, it is important to select healthy, well-developed birds. Turkeys typically reach sexual maturity at around 6-8 months of age.

Mating

Turkeys are naturally polygamous, meaning that one tom (male turkey) can mate with multiple hens (female turkeys). The ideal ratio is one tom for every 10-15 hens.

Incubation

Turkey eggs are typically incubated for 28 days. The eggs should be incubated in a humidified incubator at a temperature of around 99.5°F.

Hatching

Once the eggs hatch, the poults (baby turkeys) should be moved to a warm, draft-free brooder. Provide them with a starter feed and water and monitor them closely for the first few weeks of life.

Raising turkeys can be a rewarding experience, providing you with a source of meat, eggs, and companionship. By following the guidelines outlined in this comprehensive guide, you can ensure the health and well-being of your turkeys and maximize their productivity. Remember, the key to successful turkey farming is providing proper care, nutrition, and a suitable housing environment.

Additional Resources

* [Raising Turkeys for Meat and Eggs]

(<https://www.extension.umn.edu/animals/raising-turkeys-meat-and-eggs>) *

[How to Build a Turkey Coop](<https://www.thespruce.com/build-diy-turkey-coop-5114982>) * [Turkey Health and Management]

(<https://www.merckvetmanual.com/poultry/turkeys/-to-turkeys>)



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