

THE TURKEY BUSINESS IN SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

By

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For commercial turkey meat production, the usual practice is to start heavy-breed poults in the winter and spring months and market them in the fall. Frequently, hen turkeys are marketed from 20 to 22 weeks of age and toms from 24 to 27 weeks of age. Although weights vary a great deal with the strain, representative live weights at these ages are 14 pounds for hens and 26 pounds for toms. Sometimes turkeys are marketed as fryers at younger ages and lighter weights--12 to 14 weeks old and 7 to 9 pounds average live weight.

Turkey hatching-egg production is another important turkey enterprise. Turkey breeders are selected from the flock in the fall, and lay eggs soon after night lights are used. Hens are about 32 weeks of age when they start to lay. Hatching eggs are generally produced from November to July.

Many turkeys and turkey hatching eggs are produced under contracts with feed companies, breeding farms, and others. When raising turkeys on contract, growers supply the farm facilities and labor, and feed companies the poults and feed. Miscellaneous costs may be shared. A grower's income will vary with the results obtained and the terms of the contract; if the flock does well, growers receive payments of 20 to 40 cents per turkey for providing farm facilities, labor, and part of the miscellaneous costs.

In contract egg production, the contractor may own the breeders and supply the feed, or the grower may own the breeders, pay for the feed, and sell eggs to the contractor. Payments may vary with the season and candling reports.

MANAGEMENT

Fast-growing Broad Breasted Bronze and Large White are the varieties generally raised. Pens should be located on well-drained soil and away from residential areas. Adequate shade is needed to avoid mortality during hot weather.

Turkeys are supplied with all the feed they care to eat. Carefully balanced high protein starter mashes or crumbled pellets are fed ad lib to young poults. As they grow older, the protein level is gradually reduced and whole grain may be added to the ration. Feed required to market age varies mostly with the age at marketing, energy level of the feed, and strain. For raising heavy strains to maturity, feed consumption of about 70 pounds of high energy feed per bird can be expected. Water is provided at all times.

Disease control is essential. Diseases are best prevented by starting with disease-free stock, rearing poults a considerable distance from the breeders or other flocks, and following a strict sanitation program. Drugs and vaccines aid in preventing or controlling disease. Chickens and turkeys should not be raised on the same ranch, since chickens are likely to carry serious turkey diseases.

ESTIMATED CAPITAL INVESTMENT REQUIRED FOR
RAISING 30,000 ROASTER TURKEYS - 1970

	Original Cost	Yearly Depr.	Investment/ Turkey
Land - 15 acres @ \$2,000 per acre	\$30,000	--	\$1.00
<u>Buildings</u>			
2 - Brooder houses* 30' x 165' and equipment	14,000	\$1,400	.47
1 - Utility building 20' x 24'	1,500	150	.05
<u>Equipment</u>			
4 Bulk storage tanks	2,000	100	.06(+)
Shades (20,000 sq. ft. @ .15/sq. ft.)	3,000	300	.10
Feeders, waterers, pipe, fencing, feeding equipment, etc.	10,150	1,015	.34
Well and pump	2,000	80	.06(+)
TOTAL INVESTMENT FOR LAND, EQUIPMENT, AND BUILDINGS	\$62,650	\$3,045	\$2.09

* Based on raising 3 broods of 11,000 day-old poults each.

ESTIMATED ANNUAL INCOME AND EXPENSES FOR 30,000 ROASTER TURKEYS--20 LB. AVERAGE WEIGHT

	Quantity	Assumed Price	Total Value	Per Pound	Per Turkey
<u>Income</u>					
Turkey Sales	600,000 lbs.	\$ (.21) lb.	\$126,000.	-	\$ 4.20
<u>Expenses</u>					
Feed purchases*	21,000 cwt.	\$4.00/cwt.	\$ 84,000	14.00¢	\$ 2.80
Poults	33,000	.60 ea.	19,800	3.30	.66
Hired labor	1,500 hours	1.75/hour	2,625	.44	.09
Miscellaneous:					
Interest, gas, litter, medication, repairs, etc.			7,200	1.20	.24
Depreciation			3,045	.51	.10
TOTAL CASH AND DEPRECIATION COSTS			\$116,670	19.45¢	\$ 3.89
NET FARM INCOME			\$ 9,330	1.55¢	.31
Family labor	2,500 hours	1.75/hour	\$ 4,375	.73	.15
Interest on average investment @ 6%			2,720	.45	.09
TOTAL COST OF PRODUCTION			\$123,765	20.63	4.13
MANAGEMENT INCOME			\$ 2,235	.37¢	.07

* 70 lbs. per turkey or 3.5 lbs. of feed per lb. of turkey.

Investment costs can vary considerably from farm to farm, as well as production costs. Turkeys marketed at younger ages and at slightly lower weights would require less feed per pound, but average feed cost would be somewhat higher. Recent average California turkey prices, cents per pound live at the ranch, were:

1963 - 21.7	1965 - 22.9	1967 - 18.6	1969 - 23.4 ^{a/}
1964 - 20.8	1966 - 23.2	1968 - 20.8	

^{a/} San Joaquin Valley weighted average prices (yearlings excluded).