Management practices For Turkeys

Turkeys are reared for meat only and its meat is the leanest among other domestic avian species. Achieving the genetic potential of turkey breeds depends on an appropriate environment, good feed and water quality, as well as an effective biosecurity and disease control programme. (Check Farm Biosecurity)

Terminologies

An adult male turkey is called a Tom

An adult female turkey is called a hen

A young turkey is called a poult

Practices

The environment in which turkeys are grown must take into account their needs and protect them from physical and thermal discomfort, fear and distress.

Poults should be debeaked to control feather picking and cannibalism. Debeaking can be done at day 10 or 3-5 weeks of age. Remove the beak at about one third the distance from nostril to the tip of the beak.

Removal of the snood or dewbill can be done at day old by finger pressure or at 3 weeks by cutting it off close to the head with a sharp scissors.

This is to prevent head injuries during a fight. It is not a common practice in West Africa but this can help in reducing the spread of pox virus within a farm.

Toe clipping is done at day old by removing the tip of the toe including the entire toenail.

Benefits of Turkey Meat

Turkey meat is a lean meat. People prefer it because of its leanest nature. The protein, fat, energy value of turkey meat are 24%,6.6%, 162 Calories per 100 gm of meat.It is rich in Mineral like potassium, calcium, magnesium, iron, selenium, zinc and sodium. It is also rich in essential amino acids and vitamins like niacin, vitamin B6 and B12. It is rich in unsaturated fatty acids and essential fatty acids and low in cholesterol.

Brooding

The turkey will start lay from the 30th week of age and its production period is 24 weeks from the point of lay and lay as much as 60-100 eggs annually. The turkey Egg is noticeably pointed at one end with strong shell.

The incubation period is 28 days in turkey. There are two methods of incubation namely natural and artificial.

Naturally turkeys are good brooders and can hatch 10-15 eggs.

Only clean eggs with good eggshell and shape should be placed for brooding to get upto 80% hatchability and healthy poults.

In turkey 0-4 weeks of age known as brooding period.

As a rule of thumb, light should be sufficient as to read a newspaper while standing.

Light should be evenly distributed in the house.

For the first day, poults should receive at least 1 hour of darkness.

Increase period of darkness each day until birds receive 8 hours of continuous darkness by 5 to 10 days.

Afterwards, poults should have 8 hours of continuous darkness per night.

Turkeys are not the best starters in their life and will really need some real care to get them safely through the first four weeks of life.

The average mortality rate should not exceed 6-10% during this period.

Young poults by nature are reluctant to eat and drink in the first few days of life, therefore, you might consider force feeding them.

Turkey poults need double hover space as compared to chicken.

Brooding day old poults can be done using infra red bulbs or gas brooder and traditional brooding systems.

The floor space requirement for brooding period is 1.5 sq.ft. per bird.

The brooder house should be made ready atleast 3 days before the arrival of poults.

The litter material should be wood shavings and not sawdust or newspaper and should be spread lightly at first.

Draft shields must be in place to prevent excessive wind from getting to the poults.

Starting temperature is 95^0F followed by weekly reduction of 5^0F per week upto 4

weeks of age. This of course, depends on the weather condition.

Production Systems

Turkeys can be reared in free-range system or intensive system.

In the free range system, in one acre of fenced land you can rear 200-300 adult turkeys.

Shelter should be provided for nesting during the night.

The inherent danger is the effect of predators during scavenging and uncontrolled parasite infestation.

Planting of trees will provide shade and cooler environment during the day.

To avoid leg weakness and lameness in free ranging birds, calcium should be supplemented at the rate of 250gm per week per bird.

Feed can be supplemented with vegetable waste to reduce the cost of feed.

Turkeys in the free range system are highly susceptible for internal and external parasites. Hence once a month deworming and dipping is essential to improve the growth of the birds

When turkeys are reared under deep litter system, the general managemental conditions are similar to that of chicken but care should be taken to provide adequate floor, waterer and feeder space to accommodate the large bird.

Floor, feeder and waterer space requirement of turkeys:

Age	Floor Space (Sq .Ft)	Feeder Space (cms) (Linear feeder)	Waterer Space (cms) (Linear waterer)
0-4 weeks	1.25	2.5	1.5
5-16 weeks	2.5	5.0	2.5
16-29 weeks	4.0	6.5	2.5
Turkey breeder	5.0	7.5	2.5

Nutritional Requirements

Average male turkey Will consume 24-26kg of feed before reaching market weight of about 7.5kg in 15 weeks. While an average female will consume 17-19kg to reach market weight of about 4-5kg in 18 weeks.

Nutritional Requirements of turkey:

Items	**Male**	**0-4**	**4-8**	**8-12**	**12-16**	**16-20**	**20-24**	**Adult/ Breeder**
	Female	**0-4**	**4-8**	**8-11**	**11-14**	**14-17**	**17-20**	**17-20**
ME/kg diet		2800	2900	3000	3100	3200	3300	2900
Protein (%)		28	26	22	19	16	14	14
Lysine (%)		1.6	1.5	1.3	1.0	0.8	0.65	0.6
Methinine(%)		0.5	0.45	0.38	0.33	0.28	0.23	0.2
Calcium (%)		1.2	1.0	0.85	0.75	0.65	0.5	2.25
Phosphorous(%)		0.7	0.6	0.5	0.5	0.4	0.4	0.6
Vitamin A(IU)		4000	4000	4000	4000	4000	4000	4000
Vitamin D3(IU)		900	900	900	900	900	900	900
Choline (mg)		1900	1800	1300	1100	950	800	1800
Niacin (mg)		70	70	50	50	40	40	30

Reference

Tables adapted from CENTRAL POULTRY DEVELOPMENT ORGANISATION, (SOUTHERN REGION) HESSARGHATTA, BANGALORE – 560088.