

Turkey Production

For market turkey production, most turkeys are of the large type. The usual marketing age of tom turkeys is 20 weeks at a live weight in excess of 27 pounds. Hens are marketed at 16 weeks averaging 14.5 pounds. Younger, smaller are sold as oven-ready dressed birds. Older, heavier birds are generally used for further processing or the restaurant trade.

Turkeys grow faster than chickens; hence they have higher feed and protein requirements. Rations are changed frequently to adjust to the specific needs of the bird and to minimize feed costs. Methionine is the first limiting amino acid in turkey nutrition. Most turkey diets will contain added methionine. Niacin and choline are added in greater amounts in turkey feeds than in most any other diet. A five stage program described below is rather typical of a commercial turkey feeding program.

Feeding Program

1. **Prestarter** - This is a high protein feed (28% C.P.) for starting turkey poults. Turkey poults will double in size the first week. This requires good quality feed. Turkey prestarters should not contain supplemental fat. This allows the poult to establish its digestive system with little or no diarrhea.
2. **Starter** - This feed should contain approximately 26% C.P. As in the prestarter, this ration usually includes fish meal as an ingredient.
3. **Grower I** - This stage is a period of rapid growth in turkeys. This ration is approximately 23% C.P. Supplemental fat may be used in this and succeeding rations. It is reported that feed efficiency increases 1.5% for each 1% added fat.
4. **Grower II** - A 20% C.P. grower formulated to maximize weight gain and feed efficiency.
5. **Finisher** - The turkey is a high energy, low protein formula designed to “finish” the birds for market.

	Prestarter 28.5% CP	Starter 26% CP	Grower I 23% CP	Grower II 20% CP	Finisher 15.5% CP
Age (male)	0-4 weeks	4-8 weeks	8-12 weeks	12-18 weeks	18 weeks to market
Age (female)	0-4 weeks	4-6 weeks	6-10 weeks	10-16 weeks	16 weeks -market
Yellow corn	870	1010	1155	1320	1580
Soybean Meal 44%	895	755	670	505	280
Meat & Bone Meal	130	130	130	130	100
Fish Meal	50	50	---	---	---
Meat Bird Premix	50	50	50	50	50
Salt	6	6	6	6	6



Approximate Feed Requirements (Amount/Turkey)

	Age	Hens	Toms
Prestarter	0-4 wks	2.5 lb	3.0 lb
	4-8 wks		
Start	4-6 wks	3.0 lb	8.0 lb
	8-12 wks		
Grower I	6-6 wks	11.0 lb	16.0 lb
	12-18 wks		
Grower II	10-16 wks	24.0 lb	40.0 lb
	18-20 wks		
Finisher			18.0 lb
Total		40.5 lb	85.5 lb

Management

1. Prevent poult “starve out” - Upon arrival, poults should be encouraged to consume feed and water as soon as possible; the lip of the feeder should be at poult beak height; poults should be eating and drinking within 48 hours.
2. Lighting should be continuous for the first 36 - 48 hours of delivery (although within the first 12 hours it is a good idea to give the flock a short dark period - maximum of one hour). After two days, cut the light back fairly rapidly until 14 hours is reached by five days of age.
3. Space allowances:

	Floor Space per bird	Feeder Space per bird	Water Space per bird
Hens			
0-6 weeks	0.6 sq. ft.	1.50 inches	0.50 inches
6-10 weeks	1.2 sq. ft.	0.75 inches	0.50 inches
10-16 weeks	2.4 sq. ft.	0.75 inches	0.50 inches
Toms			
0-4 weeks	0.6 sq. ft.	1.50 inches	0.50 inches
4-8 weeks	1.2 sq. ft.	0.75 inches	0.50 inches
8-12 weeks	2.1 sq. ft.	0.75 inches	0.75 inches
12-18 weeks	3.0 sq. ft.	1.50 inches	0.75 inches
18 weeks to market	4.0 sq. ft.	1.50 inches	1.00 inches

