



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT RAISING TURKEY

HORMONES, STEROIDS AND ANTIBIOTICS

1. Are turkeys given hormones or steroids for growth?

No. All turkeys are free from any addition of either hormone or steroids. Adding hormones in poultry is prohibited by federal law. Genetic improvements, better feed formulation and modern management practices have resulted in the meatier turkeys for today's consumer.

2. What is the role of antibiotics in raising turkeys?

Our turkey farmers grow for the consumers' preference while striving to offer affordable value for all Americans in choice and variety. We use antibiotics to treat infection to ensure our flocks do not suffer from disease, in accordance with American Association of Avian Pathologists and the Animal Veterinary Medical Association.

Measured antibiotic use is prescribed with withdrawal time to ensure turkey is safe to eat. Purpose for treatment, type of medicine, and dosage as well as mandated time for medicines to clear the animals' system before marketing are strictly limited by FDA's Center for Veterinary Medicine and confirmed by test results overseen by USDA's Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS).

AVIAN INFLUENZA

3. How do farmers and state and federal officials control Avian Influenza once it's been detected?

Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) cases have occurred in individual turkey flocks as well as in chickens in states located within some of the migratory flyways of wild birds carrying Avian Influenza. These are termed "highly pathogenic" cases because domestic poultry exposed to this particular strain of the virus are certain to die swiftly after suffering from this strain of virus that affects only birds. To prevent adjacent poultry flocks from becoming sick, humane methods of destroying the animals are used by the federal government and approved by the American Veterinary Medical Association. The birds are then disposed of, never to enter the marketplace.

4. How do turkey growers remain on-guard against avian influenza?

Turkeys are kept separate from wild bird populations carrying the virus. Entry into turkey barns is strictly controlled to limit access only to workers who change clothing and boots to prevent mud and dirt from carrying the virus into a barn. Turkey farmers are also controlling ventilation



and openings in their barns to lower the opportunity for wind-blown dust particles, feathers or wild birds and rodents from carrying the virus. Researchers and farmers are continuing to share preventive measures that evolve from a systematic study of the virus' many pathways that infect poultry.

5. What happens to turkeys with Avian Influenza?

Birds on farms affected by Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza are no longer viable for sale and are prohibited from entering the marketplace. Turkey products remain safe, wholesome and nutritious.

6. Turkey is safe to eat?

Yes. The turkey industry and state governments sponsor extensive testing programs to screen for any signs of Avian Influenza. Any flock found to be infected with Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza is destroyed on the farm and will not enter the food supply. According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), the North American strain of Avian Influenza has not been known to cause illnesses in people and does not pose immediate health risks to the public or to poultry plant workers.

The USDA inspects all poultry in the United States to ensure the security and safety of the food supply. According to the CDC, proper handling and cooking of food destroys germs and bacteria. As with all meal preparation, the USDA recommends cooking poultry to a minimum internal temperature of 165 degrees Fahrenheit.

7. Is there a sufficient supply of Thanksgiving turkey available?

Yes. There are 250 million turkeys grown each year in the United States, throughout many regions of the country. Consumers will have no problem finding a whole turkey for Thanksgiving. In part, this is because a sufficient stock of frozen whole turkey already has been produced and flash-frozen for quality by March of each year. Distributors and supermarket chains have already contracted for frozen whole turkey as promotional incentives for the Thanksgiving shopper.

TURKEY FACTS

8. What are the differences among free range, organic and natural turkeys?

For poultry, the term "free ranging" is regulated and requires that the bird have access to the outdoors, but for an undetermined period each day.



“Certified Organic” meats are from livestock that have been raised and certified in compliance with the National Organic Program’s standards. Their production must be certified by an accredited state or private certifying agency. Animal health is maintained through high quality nutrition obtained predominately through pasture grazing and by supplementing with organically grown feeds. Organic farmers are required to provide humane treatment, which includes access to the outdoors. Sick animals are to be treated as necessary, but can no longer be marketed as organic if dewormed or antibiotic intervention was required.

“Natural” is a food label that does not refer to how the animal was raised but rather to how it was processed. Natural products can contain no artificial ingredients, coloring agents, or chemical preservatives and must be minimally processed. Meat can be ground, smoked, roasted, dried, or frozen as long as these procedures do not fundamentally change the raw product.

9. What are turkeys fed?

Turkeys are fed corn and soybean meal containing minerals and vitamins.

10. Are turkeys raised in cages?

No. Turkeys are allowed to roam freely within their barns with constant water and feed. Turkeys are raised in these scientifically designed, temperature-regulated barns with maximum space and protection from weather, insects, rodents, predators and visitors who might carry disease.

11. How long does it take for turkeys to grow to maturity?

Today’s more modern turkey production methods have shortened the time it takes to bring turkeys to maturity. Genetic improvements, better feed formulation and modern management practices are responsible for meatier turkeys more efficient at converting feed to protein than turkeys in the wild. The turkey hen usually takes 14 weeks and weighs 15.5 pounds when processed. The tom grows for 18 weeks to reach a weight of 38 pounds.

12. What’s the difference between fresh and frozen turkey?

Both frozen and fresh turkeys are quality products. Frozen turkeys are flash frozen immediately after packaging to zero degrees Fahrenheit or below, and held at that safe temperature. Fresh turkeys are deep-chilled after packaging and have shorter shelf lives. The term "fresh" may only be placed on raw poultry that has never been below 26°F. Because they are perishable and require special handling and merchandising, fresh turkeys may command a higher price than frozen turkeys.



13. What's the difference between wild and domesticated turkeys?

Domesticated turkeys are bred to have more breast meat, meatier thighs and white feathers. Turkeys have been bred to have white feathers so they leave no pigment spots under the skin when plucked. Taste is a personal preference – and people's taste buds and taste preferences differ, as would their descriptions of perceived tastes. There are observable differences in the tougher skin of cooked wild turkey as well as its firmer meat compared to the softer, meatier breast of the white broad-breasted domesticated turkey – purely a matter of preference that is also affected by preparation from brining or marinating as well as oven-roasting or deep-frying.

14. How is most turkey sold?

Turkey hens are usually sold as whole birds and preferred for their more manageable size for the Thanksgiving Dinner, while the larger male toms are prepared as cutlets, ground turkey, turkey tenderloins, turkey sausage, turkey franks, and turkey deli meats.