Vigor and vitality are essential in breeders; 36 pounds is the standard weight for adult bronze toms over two years of age.
Rearing Turkeys in Confinement

By H. H. Alp, Extension Specialist in Poultry Husbandry

During the past few years a number of people in Illinois, as well as in other states, have had good results from raising turkeys in confinement. In fact anyone who contemplates keeping turkeys in Illinois can hardly afford to overlook this method. It provides conditions which help materially in preventing blackhead and worms. While it entails considerable careful work, the results more than pay for the labor.

Little success has been achieved thus far in Illinois when turkeys have been allowed free range with other poultry.

Incubation

It is a well-known fact that turkey eggs can be successfully incubated in most modern incubators. This is probably the most satisfactory and safest way. Turkey eggs require a 28-day incubation period, and it is generally conceded that they require a little more moisture while incubating than do hen eggs.

When natural methods of incubation are employed, great care should be taken to see that the birds used are free from all parasites.

Yarding Plan for Brooding

The plan of yarding generally followed in this state is very similar to the plan used and recommended in other states. The brooder house
is located on ground on which poultry has not ranged for two or more years, to insure freedom from blackhead and worms. This is very important. The young birds are let out in one of four small yards that generally measure about 10 by 50 feet each. These yards are used in rotation, the young turkeys remaining in each yard for ten days to two weeks. By the time they have been in the fourth yard for about two weeks, they should be roosting and able to do without heat.

As an alternative to the yarding system recommended for the first 6 to 8 weeks, a wire-floor pen may be used in connection with the brooder house. Details concerning this method are given in Circular 352, "Rearing Chicks in Confinement," which may be had on request.

**Suggestions for Rearing Range**

From the brooder house the young turkeys may be moved to a rearing range. One to 1½ acres of good sod, clover, or alfalfa range is generally considered sufficient for about 100 turkeys from the time they are 6 or 8 weeks old until they are of marketable age.

This range is divided into four sections, each being used for about a month. A very cheap roosting shelter is usually provided.

The breeding flock may be kept in a lot away from other poultry.

**Feeding Turkeys in Confinement**

A ration that has proved successful for baby chicks may be used for the young turkeys.

Turkeys relish green feed, and an effort should be made to provide it. Cut alfalfa, onion tops, dandelions, and lettuce will serve very well. Some trouble may be experienced in getting the young turkeys to start eating. Cutting green feed into the mash, moistening the mash until it is in a crumbly condition, and sprinkling chopped hard-boiled eggs on the feed are practices often resorted to in order to encourage their eating.
Sweet or sour skim milk may be used as a feed for starting young turkeys until they learn to eat the mash. All feeding should be done from hoppers or troughs—never from the ground.

In short, principles of good chick feeding apply for turkeys also.

**Care of Breeding Stock**

It is as important to protect the mature flock from disease and parasites as it is the young flock. Limited range is therefore generally advisable. Confinement to a yard or lot does not hinder laying. Small A-shaped coops or old barrels may be provided for nesting purposes.

Vigor and vitality are of extreme importance in selecting breeding stock. Turkeys that are not in shape for the Thanksgiving or Christmas market should not be used as breeders. Too often in the past such birds have been used for breeders, the practice being a common mistake and probably one of the chief causes of low vitality in turkeys.

Egg production can be stimulated by feeding a good egg mash during the breeding season.

One male is generally mated with ten females. Young, well-developed males are used with good results.

### Standard Weights for Common Varieties

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>White Holland lbs.</th>
<th>Bourbon Red lbs.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Bronze lbs.</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adult tom over 2 years</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yearling tom over 1 year and under 2 years</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cockerel under 1 year</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hen 1 year or older</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pullet less than 1 year</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Fig. 3.—Turkeys Brooded to Maturity in Colony Brooder House and Small Cinder Yard**

Fresh cinders were put into this yard each week.

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