POULTRY

YOUNG TURKEY HEN BEST FOR BREEDER

Birds Under Two Years Are Most Desirable.

By J. C. Taylor, Associate Extension Poultryman, New Jersey State College. WNU Service.

Recent turkey breeding studies conducted by University of California poultrymen indicate that it is not desirable to use turkey hens of more than two years of age as breeders.

This six-year study on the age of turkey breeders and the resulting progeny showed that average egg production decreased from 76.6 eggs the first year to 49.5 eggs the second laying year. Production the third and fourth years was 44 eggs, while only 27.6 eggs were produced the fifth year.

Although production decreased with the age of the turkeys, it was found that the fertility of eggs did not change significantly with age. Hatchability of eggs decreased after the second year.

The eggs laid in the second year were larger than those produced the first year. Poults hatched from the larger eggs were larger at hatching time, but there was little difference in sizes of birds at 16 weeks of age. Mortality was a trifle higher among the progeny of the year-old hens than among those of the two-year-old hens.

Wild Turkeys Nuisance, According to Accounts

Account books of 100 years ago and earlier show that the domestic turkeys were then very small. The average weight of those sold in Boston was seven to eight pounds, according to a writer in the Boston Herald.

There was, as told in Bentley's Dairy, a farmer and innkeeper named William Breed, at Nahant, early in the Nineteenth century, who had domesticated wild turkeys which when dressed weighed 14 to 18 pounds each. These were sold in the holiday season at Salem.

At New London and Norwich, Ct., in the district which includes parts of that state and Rhode Island, the turkeys were commonly 10 to 12 pounds, and some heavier, up to 14 pounds. This is the area long famous for "Rhode Island turkeys," Westerly in that state being the great shipping point.

Ohio settlers from New England in 1806 and for several years after found the wild turkeys there a nuisance. It is recorded that at the first seeding of wheat the wild turkeys were so bold that some sowers had to stop and drive them from the neighborhood. One woman trapped about two dozen in the corncrib by strewing shelled corn about it and leaving the door open.

Molting and Production

The length of time a bird is out of production can be estimated by the molting of the primary or large wing feathers, according to a writer in the Indiana Farmer's Guide. It requires about six weeks to completely renew the primary feather next to the axial (small feather in center of wing between primaries and secondaries) feather. The remaining primaries are dropped in order, about two weeks apart and grow in at the same rate. Occasionally a bird sheds several primaries at one time, which in estimating length of time out of production should be treated as a single primary.

Poultry Gleanings

The size, shape and color of a hen does not affect the eggs.

* * *

Feather picking usually starts as a vice in closely confined birds.

* * *

The yolk of the egg is employed in making the finer kind of tawed leather.

* * *

The total number of co-operative poultry and egg marketing associations in the United States is 154.

* * *

Oats or barley, when ground, may be substituted advantageously for corn in rations for chicks and laying hens.

* * *

If chickens are given clean, wholesome feed the eggs are superior in flavor to those provided with inferior or spoiled feed.

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