



Care Considerations for Raising Turkeys

WATER: When turkeys are young, water should always be lukewarm or the poults can catch a chill from it. Keep clean, fresh water in front of them at all times, dipping their beaks in it when you first put them down in the pen.

FEED: Use 28% Medicated Turkey Starter for 4 weeks. Consult your local feed supplier for a feed program. Put feed in chick box lids, shallow pans, egg flats, paper plates or trays, and place these around the brooder area. Never make sudden changes in items like waterers or feeders – make them gradually. Turkeys can lose track of where feeders and waterers are located.

TEMPERATURE: Use one 250-watt lamp (or a similar type that will heat the floor area) for every 25 poults. Keep day old turkeys at 95° F (35° C), and lower the temperature 5° F (2-3° C) per week to 75° F (21-24° C) at 5 weeks. Allow room for the birds to move away from the heat.

VENTILATION: Fresh air must be supplied at all times. If you can smell ammonia in the pen, ammonia levels are too high, and the birds will be affected. Ventilate and add litter.

SPACE: By 14 weeks, you will need 2 square feet per bird. If birds are grown to 20 to 30 weeks, they will require 4 square feet each. Do not overcrowd.

LITTER: Litter must be at least 4" deep, and of a good insulating material – not too coarse, but not so fine as to be confused with feed. For starting turkeys, it is best to cover the shavings in the brooding area with an old towel or cloth sheet. Do not place turkeys on newspaper or any other smooth surface. Place your waterers, feeders and feed trays or pans around the brood area. Then scatter feed all over the towel or sheet. This will help the turkeys find the feed quickly. After a few days, the towel or sheet should be removed, as it will have become very damp and dirty. By this time the turkeys will be able to identify feed and locate their water. Following these recommendations will help prevent spraddle legs or curled toes, which are common complaints in young turkeys.

LEG PROBLEMS: Cold and dampness will give turkeys leg problems, so check the temperature at floor level and keep litter loose and dry. Leg problems can also result from deficiencies of certain nutrients. To promote flock health, a vitamin pack containing Biotin, Niacinamide and Vitamin B12 can be added to the water.

FEEDING TIPS: To help attract turkeys to feed and water, place coloured marbles in the water, place feed in foil pans, and sprinkle crumbled hard-boiled eggs otop of their feed.