

## Heritage Turkey Care Overview

Heritage Turkeys are more closely related to wild turkeys. They have darker meat, are able to fly, can reproduce naturally, and are slower growing than the broad breasted varieties. Growing these birds takes approximately 28 weeks. These birds are known for being more flavorful than the broad breasted variety. Their continued use as a meat bird is essential in preventing these historically significant birds from going extinct and to preserve the genetic diversity they provide to the poultry industry. In addition, these birds appeal to a niche market focused on local, slow, and/or organic foods.

### Acquiring Birds:

- Heritage Turkey Poults are ordered by the Poultry Advisory and will arrive in late February or early March
- Members must order their birds from the Advisory by the specified date (TBA)
- Birds must be paid for at the time of pick up, and members are responsible for picking up their poults from the designated pick up site (TBA)
- The Advisory recommends purchasing a minimum of three birds as turkey poults are especially delicate

### Poult Care:

- Members should arrive to pick up poults with a box or carrier with some sort of bedding on the bottom (a heating pad or warm towel to set the box on is recommended)
- Draft free brooders should be set up and waiting with water, food, and heat lamp ON for at least 24 hrs prior to the poults arrival
- The temperature should be 95 to 99 degrees - thermometer is recommended as turkey poults will not self regulate and move around the brooder for warmth like chicks
- Dip beaks in water when placing in the brooder
- Heritage poults require much closer monitoring and care than chicks
- They should be provided a draft free brooder with a constant supply of fresh water, feed, and clean bedding

- Members should watch birds closely the first few weeks to ensure *all* birds are eating and are not piling

### Transitioning Out of the Brooder:

- When outside temperatures have reached at least 65 degrees and the birds are fully feathered (8 weeks), birds may be gradually moved outside
- Allow them a few more hours a day on sunny days and increase their time outside over the course of a few weeks
- Outdoor enclosures should provide shelter from the rain, shade, and be predator proof
- Birds should continue to be provided with fresh water, food, and clean bedding or fresh pasture
- Enclosures should provide a *minimum* of 8 square feet per bird

### Feed:

- Chicks will initially require chick game bird starter - the protein content should be at least 28%, but 30% is even better
- It is the member's choice as to the type of feed: medicated, non-medicated, or organic non-medicated
- At the member's discretion, birds can be transitioned to feed containing lesser protein and more carbs
- Feed (and bedding) will be provided by a sponsor for all birds being housed in the Poultry barn during the fair

### Record Keeping:

- Members must keep accurate weight and feed records for their birds
- Weekly weigh-ins starting on day one of ownership through the final weigh-in at the Poultry Show
- Any costs incurred during the process, supplies, vet bills, feed, bedding, etc. must be recorded
- Livestock Sale Record books MUST be complete and presented on the day of the Poultry Show in order for the birds to be judged
- THESE ARE NOT REGULAR RECORD BOOKS! - IF YOUR BIRD MAKES THE SALE, YOU WILL BE REQUIRED TO SUBMIT THE COMPLETED PAGES BEFORE THE END OF THE FAIR

### **Fair Responsibilities:**

- All birds need to be washed and in good health when brought to the Poultry Show the Sunday before the fair begins
- Birds must arrive in cages with adequate space, water, and feed available
- Any birds that do not make the sale or are not chosen to stay by the advisory must be taken home at the end of the Poultry Show on Sunday
- "I'm for sale" cage sign must be filled out for any bird going to the sale
- Birds entered in the sale MUST sell - members should not enter a bird they don't want to sell
- Specific livestock sale barn duties will be required

### **Required Meetings and Submissions:**

- Ownership registration form/s completed (sometime in April)
- Mandatory Livestock Sale meeting (sometime in April)
- Youth Contract Submission (typically sometime in May)
- Pick up of Buyers Packets from Fairgrounds (End of June beginning of July)
- Deliver Buyers Packets to Buyers (Mid July)
  - Each youth will be required to meet with and present information about themselves and their animal/s to a minimum of 3 potential buyers
- Return of signed postcards (Late July)
  - After presenting, youth will ask buyers to sign a postcard confirming the presentation was complete
  - The youth will take back the cards and return them to the committee representative by the listed deadline
  - Taking photos of completed postcards and emailing as a back-up is recommended
- Last day to submit fair entries online is August 1st
- Possible submission of Bio, photos of birds being entered, and a video presentation to the Livestock Committee for a virtual program (TBA)
- Members must present Livestock Sale Record Book for review (At the Poultry Show Weigh-In, August 22nd)
  - Members must help set up sale (Saturday of the Fair)

- Members must attend Livestock Sale reception and auction (Saturday of the Fair)
- Livestock Sale Clean up (Saturday of the Fair)
- Discuss any special processing requests with buyer/s
- Mandatory Seller's meeting, Animal Record Book Submission, and stamped Thank You Card Submission (Sunday of Fair)
- Transport of any Livestock Sale birds to the processor (Monday after the fair)
- Pick up birds from the processor and deliver to the seller (as determined by the processor and buyer)

### **Supplies Needed:**

- Box for transporting poults
- Chick feeder and waterer
- Thermometer
- Colored leg bands or zip ties for telling birds apart
- Brooder with heat source
- Bedding
- Feed for all stages of growth
- Outdoor or indoor accommodations for pullets and cockerels (4 square feet minimum per bird)
- Large bird feeder and waterer
- Cages or crates for safely transporting birds to and from the fair
- Travel water and feed containers for transport cages
- Scale for weighing birds
- Livestock Sale Record Book for EACH bird being raised
- bucket/s, dish soap, vinegar, and towels for washing birds prior to fair

**Commitment:** (varies based on poult hatch dates, but 28 weeks is the ideal grow time)

- 28+ weeks of daily water/feed/health checks
- 28 weekly weigh-ins
- 28 weeks of record keeping for each bird
- 28+ weeks of coop/run cleaning or tractor rotation