

November 2021 – Turkey Facts

(https://web.extension.illinois.edu/turkey/turkey_facts.cfm)

- Ben Franklin, in a letter to his daughter, proposed the turkey as the official United States bird.
- In 2012, the average American ate 16 pounds of turkey.
- 88% of Americans surveyed by the National Turkey Federation eat turkey on Thanksgiving.
- 46 million turkeys are eaten each Thanksgiving, 22 million on Christmas and 19 million turkeys on Easter.
- In 2011, 736 million pounds of turkey were consumed in the United States.
- Turkey consumption has increased 104% since 1970.
- Since 1970, turkey production in the United States has increased nearly 110%.
- In 2013, 242 million turkeys are expected to be raised in the United States.
- In 2012, 253,500,000 turkeys were produced in the United States.
- The turkey industry employs 20,000 to 25,000 persons in the United States.
- In 1970, 50% of all turkey consumed was during the holidays, now just 29% of all turkey consumed is during the holidays as more turkey is eaten year-round.
- In 2012, turkey was the # 4 protein choice for American consumers behind chicken, beef and pork
- The top three turkey products sold in 2011 were whole birds, ground turkey and cooked white meat (deli meat).
- Turkey hens are usually sold as whole birds. Toms are processed into turkey sausage, turkey franks, tenderloins, cutlets and deli meats.
- In 2011, 47.4% of turkeys were sold to grocery stores and other retail outlets, 30% sold in commodity outlets, 15.5% sold to foodservice outlets and 6.2% were exported.
- In 2011, 703.3 million pounds of turkey were exported.
- The average weight of a turkey purchased at Thanksgiving is 15 pounds.
- The heaviest turkey ever raised was 86 pounds, about the size of a large dog.
- A 15-pound turkey usually has about 70 percent white meat and 30 percent dark meat.
- The wild turkey is native to northern Mexico and the eastern United States.
- The male turkey is called a tom.
- The female turkey is called a hen.
- The turkey was domesticated in Mexico and brought to Europe in the 16th century.
- Tom turkeys have beards. That is comprised of black, hair-like feathers on their breast.
- Canadians consumed 142 million kgs of turkey in the year 2012.
- Turkeys can see movement almost 100 yards away.
- Turkeys lived almost ten million years ago.
- Baby turkeys are called poults and are tan and brown.
- Turkey eggs are tan with brown specks and are larger than chicken eggs.
- It takes 75-80 pounds of feed to raise a 30-pound tom turkey.
- In 1920, U.S. turkey growers produced one turkey for every 29 persons in the U.S. Today growers produce nearly one turkey for every person in the country.
- Male turkeys gobble. Hens do not. They make a clicking noise.
- Gobbling turkeys can be heard a mile away on a quiet day.
- Minnesota, North Carolina, Arkansas, Missouri, Virginia, Indiana, California, South Carolina, Pennsylvania and Ohio were the leading producers of turkeys in 2011-2012.
- Minnesota raised 46 million turkeys in 2012.
- Illinois farmers produce close to 3 million turkeys each year.
- A 16 week old turkey is called a fryer. A 5 to 7 month old turkey is called a young roaster and a yearling is a year old. Any turkey 15 months or older is called mature.
- The ballroom dance the "Turkey Trot" was named for the short, jerky steps that turkeys take.
- Turkeys do not really have ears like ours, but they have very good hearing.
- Turkeys can see in color.
- A large group of turkeys is called a flock.
- Turkeys do not see well at night.
- A domesticated male turkey can reach a weight of 30 pounds within 18 weeks after hatching.



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- Turkeys are related to pheasants.
- Commercially raised turkeys cannot fly.
- Wild turkeys spend the night in trees. They prefer oak trees.
- Wild turkeys were almost wiped out in the early 1900's. Today there are wild turkeys in every state except Alaska.
- Wild turkeys can fly for short distances up to 55 mph and can run 20 mph.
- Turkeys are believed to have been brought to Britain in 1526 by Yorkshire man William Strickland. He acquired six turkeys from American Indian traders and sold them for tuppence in Bristol.
- Henry VIII was the first English King to enjoy turkey and Edward VII made turkey eating fashionable at Christmas.
- 200 years ago in England, turkeys were walked to market in herds. They wore booties to protect their feet. Turkeys were also walked to market in the United States.
- For 87% of people in the UK, Christmas wouldn't be Christmas without a traditional roast turkey.
- Turkey breeding has caused turkey breasts to grow so large that the turkeys fall over.
- June is National Turkey Lover's Month.
- Since 1947, the National Turkey Federation has presented a live turkey and two dressed turkeys to the President. The President does not eat the live turkey. He "pardons" it and allows it to live out its days on a historical farm.
- The National Thanksgiving Turkey has been the Grand Marshall in the Thanksgiving Day Parade at both Disneyland Resort in California and Walt Disney World in Florida for the past four years.
- The five most popular ways to serve leftover turkey are in a sandwich, stew, chili or soup, casseroles and as a burger.
- Eating turkey does not cause you to feel sleepy after your Thanksgiving dinner. Carbohydrates in your Thanksgiving dinner are the likely cause of your sleepiness.
- According to the 2007 Census, there were 8,284 turkey farms in the United States.
- Turkey is low in fat and high in protein.
- Turkey has more protein than chicken or beef.
- White meat has fewer calories and less fat than dark meat.
- Turkeys will have 3,500 feathers at maturity.
- Turkeys have been bred to have white feathers. White feathers have no spots under the skin when plucked.
- Most turkey feathers are composted.
- Turkey feathers were used to stabilize arrows and adorn ceremonial dress, and the spurs on the legs of wild tom turkeys were used as projectiles on arrowheads.
- Turkey skins can be tanned and used to make cowboy boots and belts.
- The costume that "Big Bird" wears on Sesame Street is rumored to be made of turkey feathers.
- The caruncle is a red-pink fleshy growth on the head and upper neck of the turkey.
- Turkeys have a long, red, fleshy growth called the snood from the base of the beak that hangs down over the beak.
- The bright red fleshy growth under a turkey's throat is called a wattle.
- The beard is a lock of hair found on the chest of the male turkey.
- Giblets are the heart, liver, and gizzard of a poultry carcass. Although often packaged with them, the neck of the bird is not a giblet.
- Turkey eggs hatch in 28 days.
- The Native Americans hunted wild turkey for its sweet, juicy meat as early as 1000 A.D
- There are a number of towns in the United States named after the holiday's traditional main course. Turkey, Texas, was the most populous in 2005, with 492 residents; followed by Turkey Creek, Louisiana (357); and Turkey, North Carolina (269). There also are 9 townships around the country named "Turkey," 3 in Kansas.



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