

# Turkey Production Factsheet



**Farm  
Advisory  
Service**

National Advice Hub  
T: 0300 323 0161  
E: [advice@fas.scot](mailto:advice@fas.scot)  
W: [www.fas.scot](http://www.fas.scot)

**Turkeys are a seasonal product with the majority of turkey meat being consumed at Christmas. In 2020 there were 15,732 farmed turkeys in Scotland, this is a 149% increase in turkey numbers from 2010.**

The infrastructure required depends on the size of your enterprise and the production system you adopt. With smaller enterprises it is key to keep fixed costs low so using existing resources on farm can be very advantageous, such as utilising existing buildings for housing, making feed troughs out of materials on farm etc. However, drinkers etc are available at relatively low cost and are likely worth the initial investment.

With regards to stocking rates and space requirements, this again depends on the system you adopt, see below.

## Rearing

Accommodation Type	Stocking Rate
Broiler-type housing	260 square cm per kg
Tier brooders	515 square cm per kg
Carry-on cages – hay boxes raised on wire or slats, and verandas	300 square cm per kg
Pole barns	410 square cm per kg
Enclosed range areas	10 square metres per bird (1,000 birds per hectare)

## Breeding

Accommodation Type	Stocking Rate
On floors	515 square cm per kg
Males kept for artificial insemination	1 square metre per bird
Hens in individual pens	345 square cm per bird
Males in individual pens	1 square metre per bird
Enclosed range areas	17 square metres per bird (590 birds per hectare)

Regardless of the system you adopt housing should be warm, dry and free from draughts. This will require a heat source, particularly for the brooding stage. Ideally any housing should be warm throughout to avoid overcrowding in any area.

Even when fully stocked, all accommodation and its ventilation need to be good enough to protect the birds from overheating and conditions that'll lead to chilling, huddling and smothering, under any weather conditions. Chicks should also be protected from strong direct sunlight to avoid heat stress (shown by birds panting for a long time).

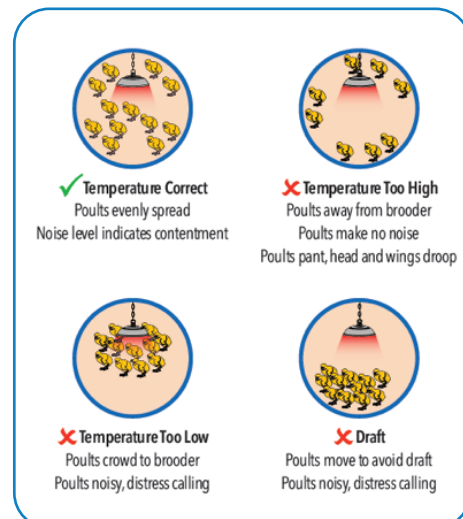
All birds must also have access to fresh feed as well as clean water. With regards to lighting, you should create a period of darkness in each 24-hour cycle. If birds don't have access to natural light they should get at least 8 hours of lighting per day.

Specially designed poultry housing is available new and second hand, so if you need to purchase housing for turkeys, it is worth shopping around and keeping an eye on the sales sections of popular agricultural magazines.

When designing housing you should follow the codes of recommendations for the welfare of turkeys: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/poultry-on-farm-welfare/turkeys-welfare-recommendations>



The ideal brooding set up.



Visual indicators of housing conditions.

## Breed Selection

Breed selection again depends on the system and size of your enterprise as well as your market. Commercial breeds of turkeys such as the Broad Breasted White have faster growth rates, while more traditional breeds such as the Standard Bronze can attract a premium from the consumer as well as provide a visitor attraction when outside.



Broad Breasted White Turkey.



Standard Bronze Turkey.

When selecting breeds/strains it is important to consider your market. Does your buyer require a consistent weight or will they require a variation in weights and eating quality? If they do, then varying the breeds, sex and age at slaughter will allow you to meet the demand of your consumers.

The table shows the average live weights and oven ready weights for various strains of turkeys.

<https://www.farmgatehatcheries.co.uk/home.aspx>

AVERAGE LIVE WEIGHT (LW) & OVEN-READY WEIGHT (OR)																
FOR AGE COMPARISON BY STRAIN (KG)																
STRAIN	TINY Bronze				SUPERMINI SPECIAL Bronze & White				SUPER MINI Bronze & White				ROLY POLY Bronze, White & Black			
AGE (weeks)	Hen		Stag		Hen		Stag		Hen		Stag		Hen		Stag	
	LW	OR	LW	OR	LW	OR	LW	OR	LW	OR	LW	OR	LW	OR	LW	OR
10	2.3	1.8	2.9	2.3	2.5	2.0	3.2	2.5	2.8	2.2	3.5	2.8	2.9	2.3	3.1	2.4
12	3.0	2.4	3.9	3.1	3.2	2.6	4.2	3.4	3.6	2.8	4.7	3.7	3.8	3.0	5.0	4.0
14	3.6	2.8	4.8	3.8	3.9	3.1	5.3	4.2	4.3	3.4	5.9	4.7	4.6	3.6	6.2	4.9
16	4.1	3.2	5.7	4.5	4.5	3.6	6.4	5.1	5.0	4.0	7.1	5.6	5.3	4.2	7.4	5.9
18	4.5	3.6	6.6	5.2	5.0	4.0	7.4	5.9	5.6	4.4	8.2	6.5	6.0	4.8	8.6	6.8
20	4.8	3.8	7.3	5.8	5.4	4.3	8.3	6.6	6.0	4.8	9.3	7.4	6.7	5.3	9.8	7.8
22	5.0	4.0	7.8	6.2	5.7	4.6	9.1	7.3	6.3	5.0	10.1	8.0	7.4	5.9	10.7	8.5
24	5.2	4.1	8.1	6.4	5.9	4.8	9.6	7.7	6.6	5.2	10.9	8.7	7.8	6.2	11.6	9.2

## Sourcing stock

Sourcing stock is relatively simple, small scale as well as large commercial hatcheries can supply and deliver unhatched eggs, day old chicks or older poults. However, when you are starting out it is best to keep things simple and start with day old chicks or poults.

With regards to pricing of the stock, it again depends on the breed you select as well as the quantity which you are purchasing, deductions are available for larger orders.

## Nutrition

As with other livestock, optimal nutrition from the start is key. A good start for the poults ensures that you get the best performance from your flock. During the first four weeks of a bird's life the fundamental development of the skeleton, immune system and cardiovascular system takes place. Exposure to stress from poor housing, poor feed and water at this stage can compromise their development.

In the first 5 weeks the chicks should be fed Turkey chick crumbs. This is a commercially available feed with a high protein content (27-28%) which should be fed ad-lib from 1 day to 5 weeks of age. If this isn't available, rearing turkey pellets can be ground down to between 1mm and 3mm and fed.

Once past the 5-week stage turkeys should be fed rearing and then finishing pellets, both of which are commercially available pellets. Chicken feed should be avoided as the mineral requirements for turkeys are different from chicken feed.

## Marketing

To kill, process and sell your own turkeys you will need a slaughter licence, issued by Food Standards Scotland, this requirement cannot be circumvented by getting someone with a slaughter licence to slaughter your turkeys for you. As with all government bodies it is better to contact them directly and ensure that you are complying rather than being caught out on inspection.

When it comes to selling your product, social media is a very useful tool for marketing your produce as well as producing your own website, however, for small flocks the investment required to do this may be prohibitive.

The Farm Advisory Website has a wide range of guidance available on direct marketing:

<https://www.fas.scot/>

## Further information

<https://www.farmgatehatcheries.co.uk/stock-management-stock-management-149-mi.aspx>

<https://www.aviagenturkeys.com/en-gb/videos>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/poultry-on-farm-welfare/turkeys-welfare-recommendations>

<https://www.roysfarm.com/poultry/turkey/>

<https://nadis.org.uk/disease-a-z/poultry/>

<https://www.thepoultrysite.com/meat-poultry>

<https://www.theselfsufficienthomeacre.com/2018/04/choose-the-best-turkeys-for-your-homestead.html>

<https://www.livestocking.net/how-to-start-turkey-farming-production>

<https://www.foodstandards.gov.scot/business-and-industry/safety-and-regulation/approval-of-meat-plants/slaughter/supply-of-on-farm-slaughtered-and-delayed-eviscerated-poultry>