

The Turkey Times

Volume XXII, Issue 1 — Autumn 2011

Published by The Turkey Farm, New Sharon, Maine



Letters, we get letters . . .

. . . and they say
the Turkeys are
worth the effort

By Bob Neal

When you see the 2011 price for holiday Turkeys, you may be tempted to go back to the warehouse Turkeys you used to buy as loss-leaders at a supermarket.

Before you do that, please consider what's behind the price increase of 54 cents a pound.

And, let some customers from earlier years add their testimonials to the chorus.

*The dishes are washed and
put away, the bellies are full,
and it was another AMAZING
turkey!! One would never buy
another supermarket bird if
they were lucky enough
to eat one of yours!*

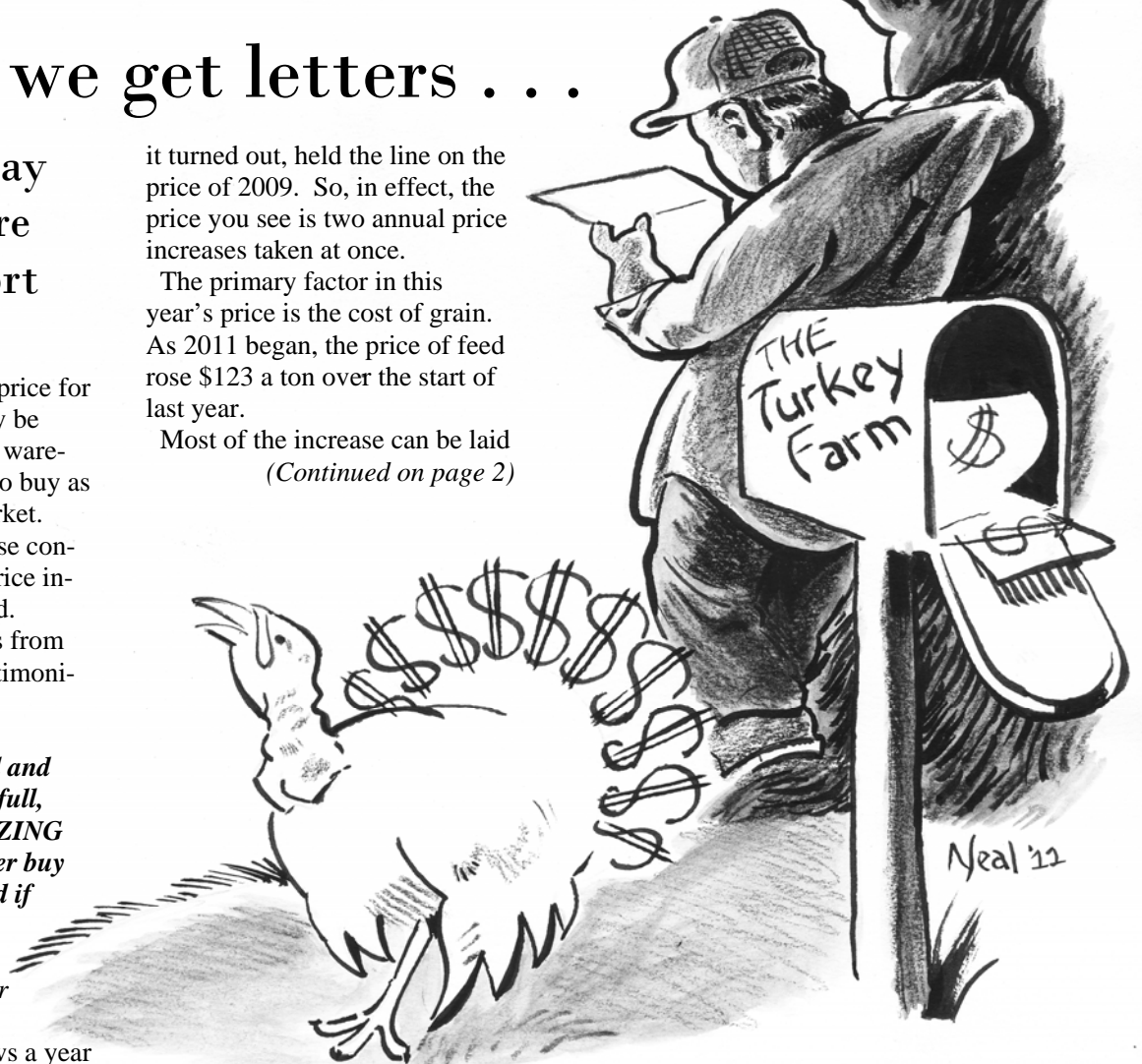
—New Gloucester

Our price increase follows a year
in which we had, ill-advisedly as

it turned out, held the line on the price of 2009. So, in effect, the price you see is two annual price increases taken at once.

The primary factor in this year's price is the cost of grain. As 2011 began, the price of feed rose \$123 a ton over the start of last year.

Most of the increase can be laid
(Continued on page 2)



It's your call for the holiday Turkey: Quality vs. price

(Continued from page 1)

directly at the door of the federal government mandate to add ethanol to gasoline. That has pushed the price of corn up to nearly \$8 a bushel from about \$2.75 a bushel in 2006.

That raised our feed bill for 2011 by \$12,360. We expect to dress about 40,000 pounds of birds this year, so the increase in feed cost alone is more than 32 cents a pound of dressed Turkey.

Other cost increases during the year include a rise of about 20 percent in local property taxes and of 10 percent or more in the cost of packaging.

Not to mention the increase in fuel prices to run our tractor, trucks and car for farm uses.

You must decide whether to pay \$3.49 a

Once again your turkey was a big hit this year. The feedback to me was: "The juiciest and best ever." So, once again, my thanks.

—Orrs Island

pound, up from \$2.95 last year, for the premium bird.

To help you decide, here's some information, admittedly offered from our point of view, about the difference between our Turkeys and theirs.

Free-range. Many farms claim to free-range their birds. In a way, that's true, if you understand that there is truth and then there is government truth.

The government (state and federal) lets farmers call their birds free-range even if the birds live their entire lives inside a huge barn. The farmer just has to open one door for eight hours a day.

Now, what happens as a result free-ranging?

First, the birds get fresh air all day and all night. They get sunshine, which makes all living things healthier. And, they get room to move around, at least 125 square feet per bird on our farm vs. two square feet in a large barn.

Second, the cost of raising the birds goes up. We figure that free-ranging the birds adds about three weeks to

their growing time. In September, we compared our dressed weights with those on a farm in Massachusetts that

I just wanted to tell you how much we enjoyed our turkey this Thanksgiving. It was the best ever! You rock!

—Brunswick

started its flock at the same time. The southern birds dressed about two pounds heavier.

The longer growth time gives the meat better flavor and texture because the birds exercised. But they eat more feed because they live longer and grow slower, which raises the cost..

Third, free-ranging Turkeys get a more varied diet because they are eating grasses (timothy, blue grass), pumpkins and corn that we plant for them.

The forage we plant makes up 7 to 10 percent of the bulk in their diet. It cuts the cost of grain, but it adds cost for seed and for tractor and cultivating time for the grasses and pumpkins.

Medication. Our birds don't do drugs.

It is standard in the Turkey business to administer three levels of antibiotics to the birds. One level is a broad-spectrum

I just want to let you know how much we love the smoked turkey that we picked up yesterday. After a nasty drive home, we questioned the logic of it all until we tasted the turkey. Thanks again.

—Bethel

antibiotic to head off disease. Another is a tranquilizer to help them deal with the stress of being cooped up in huge barns. The third is a growth promotant that gives them seven days of growth on six days of feed by encouraging the bodies to retain water.

Even farmers who claim not to medicate their birds often do so through the feed because the growth-promoting antibiotics are added to the feeds.

Additives. All warehouse Turkeys (the type sold at supermarkets) are

injected after slaughter with a "flavor enhancer" of chemicals, salt, MSG and water. We don't add "flavor enhancers." We don't have to.

These flavor enhancers amount to as much as 8.5 percent of the weight of the Turkey. In a 20-pound Turkey, that's 1.7 pounds of chemical broth.

So, you spend more time cooking your bird to get rid of the liquid, but the

Thank you for raising such fresh and all natural turkey. My family and I enjoyed it very much. Delicious! I will definitely be a repeat customer and maybe my mother will buy as well.

P.S. You made it so convenient to pick up as well.

—Bangor

the solids stay in your Turkey..

Cooking time. That brings us to holiday morning. We give every customer a guide to storing and cooking the Turkey.

This "owner's manual" points out that our Turkeys generally cook faster and at a little lower temperature than is needed for warehouse Turkeys. Saves you a bit of time and a bit of money on energy.

Taste. We maintain that it is the taste and texture that bring back 80 percent of our holiday customers every year.

We can't count the number of times people have told us they never liked Turkey until they ate ours, but the number is surely in the hundreds.

Part of the great taste is the moistness in our Turkeys. Properly cooked, our Turkeys come out moister than warehouse birds because they cook in less time.

Environmental. We are far from perfect environmentally, but we are way ahead of the growers of warehouse birds.

If you follow the news, you know that the manure runoff from huge poultry barns is destroying fishing in Chesapeake Bay. They have simply got their s**t all together there. Similar things are happening wherever huge numbers of Turkeys are grown: Minnesota, North Carolina, Virginia, Missouri.

(Concluded on page 3)

Other choices

While our piece de resistance is the farm-fresh holiday Turkey, we offer options, too, if a whole Turkey isn't quite right for you.

Smoked Turkeys. You can make the special treat more special by having us smoke your Turkey. We marinate it for a couple of days in our own brine of maple syrup, salt and lemon juice and smoke it over Maine hardwood.

The result is scrumptious, and the fully cooked Turkey can be eaten as is or warmed in the oven.

A 12-pound smoked Turkey has the meat of a 17-to-18-pound farm-fresh Turkey.

Smoked Turkeys are \$5.49 lb.

We have time and smoker capacity for only about a dozen Turkeys, so order early for Thanksgiving or Christmas.

We also smoke boneless breast roasts for \$11 lb., bone-in thighs for \$10 lb. and boneless thighs for \$10.50 lb.

Turkey breast roasts. More and more, we're getting requests for something smaller than the whole Turkey. The most common solution is our boneless Turkey breast roasts.

We pack the roasts skin-on. We recommend you cook them in a roasting pan at no hotter than 325 degrees. Roasting time is about 25 minutes per pound.

We cut the roasts from whole birds dressed at holiday time, so they are as fresh as the whole Turkeys.

Boneless breast roasts range from 2 pounds to a bit more than 5 pounds.

Breast roasts are \$6.50 lb.

Thighs. For the dark-meat lovers, we pack thighs, both bone-in and boneless.

Most folks prefer the bone-in thigh (\$5.20 lb.) for roasting because the bone evens the heat as the thigh roasts. But boneless thighs (\$6.25 lb.) work, too.

Roast the thighs same as the breast roasts, 25 minutes a pound at 325 degrees. Thighs range from 1.25 to about 2.25 pounds.

The how, when and where of ordering and picking up Turkeys

It's easy to get our Turkeys for the holidays.

Just fill out the form on this page and send it to us. Or telephone us at 778-2889 and tell us the size you want and whether you want to pick it up at our farm, at Orono, at Brunswick or at Portland/South Portland.

Or go to our website, theturkeyfarm.com, and fill out and send the order form.

Or e-mail us at turkeyfarm@gwi.net.

In all cases, we send a confirmation by e-mail, or by post if you don't have e-mail. It is less expensive for us to send it by e-mail. (We don't confirm by telephone.)

We begin dressing Thanksgiving and Christmas Turkeys during the week before the holiday, so your Turkey is fresh-dressed, no matter where you pick it up.

Our **farmstore** is open for Thanksgiving from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. Sunday, Nov. 20, through Wednesday, Nov. 23.

Our **Orono** pickup will be from 3 to 4:30 p.m. on Monday, Nov. 21, at Silver's Auto Parts on Main Street (U.S. Route 2) near the Veazie town line.

For **Portland**, we expect to have two sites, and you can meet us at either. We'll be from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. on Tuesday, Nov. 22, at the Woodfords Congregational Church UCC on Woodford Street. Then, we'll take the Turkeys over to South Portland, where we are in the process of finding a site. We'll be at South Portland from 2 to 3 p.m. on Tuesday, Nov. 22. When you order, we will let you know where the South Portland pickup will be.

The **Brunswick** pickup will be from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. on Wednesday, Nov. 23, at the Crystal Spring Farm on the Pleasant Hill Road. Just follow the crowd.

At Christmas, the farmstore hours are 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Thursday and Friday, Dec. 22 and 23. We are closed Christmas Eve.

The Orono Christmas pickup will be at 9 a.m. on Thursday, Dec. 22, at Silver's.

The Brunswick Christmas pickup will be 9 to 10 a.m. on Friday, Dec. 23, at Crystal Spring.

If we have requests for a Portland-area Christmas pickup, we will schedule one for Dec. 23.

Holiday Order Form

221

Please reserve for me the following:

THANKSGIVING	Number	Pounds	CHRISTMAS	Number	Pounds
Farm-fresh	_____	_____		_____	_____
Smoked	_____	_____		_____	_____
Boneless breast roast	_____	_____		_____	_____
Thigh (bone-in/ boneless)	_____	_____		_____	_____

I will pick up at (Check one): _____ The Farm _____ Orono
 _____ Portland/South Portland _____ Brunswick

Name _____

Address (postal) _____

Town _____ Zip _____

E-mail address _____

The summer of our discombobulation

As Gilda Radner used to quote her mother: "It's always something."

This Turkey season, it has been several somethings. The Turkeys are having one of their best growing years yet, on which we'll report in the next issue of *The Turkey Times*, but other activities on the farm have been full of twists and turns.

Many of those twists and turns revolved around staffing. It seems that even in hard times it is hard for small employers to find people willing to work. There is little incentive to work for a starting pay that is a third more than minimum wage.

We had a fairly stable crew for 15 years, anchored by Elaine Stevens, who worked here from 1993 into 2008 and managed the farm for her final five years. Since Elaine left, most employees have stayed only a short time.

This year, our most seasoned hand left on Aug. 3, without notice. He had been here three years. That left us with no one on our crew who had worked here as long as two months.

His departure meant we had to abandon the Brewer Farmers Market, where we had been selling on Thursdays. We cannot travel to Brewer in the morning and still get to South Portland's farmers market in the afternoon, so we had to choose which market to attend.

We also lost Madsy Schneider, who had helped us at Crystal Spring Farmers Market for about a year. Madsy is a senior at Brunswick High School, and her academic and athletics pursuits, plus family commitments, meant she wasn't available most Saturdays.

Lest it appear we are bereft of help, there is good news. Madsy was replaced by Tiernan Ryden, also a student at Brunswick High. Tiernan has taken to the work faster perhaps than any other helper we've had, and all of our helpers have been very good.

At the farm, Danielle Gilbert has returned part-time, and it is great to have her back. She was our key indoor staffer last year.

Danielle gave birth Aug. 10 and was able to return to work a month later. She works two days a week and has taken over much of the preparation for markets, plus working slaughters and other heavy times.

Her son, Landen, spends some of her workdays with her, and he will no doubt grow up with *The Turkey Farm* imprinted on his unconscious memory.

We also have one full-time farmhand, Jeremy Towle, who lives in Skowhegan. Jeremy brings strength plus strong mechanical skills to the job. He has been out of work for a while, and he and his family have been able to move into new rental housing since he started working here.

Without warning, we lost two suppliers, too, one crucial and one not so much.

In mid-August, Mark Murphy, co-owner of Moulee Vallee (Valley Feed) in Richmond, P.Q., visited to tell us that the Canadian workplace-safety agency (equivalent of OSHA) had ordered changes to the plant that his company could not afford, so he and his partner were closing the mill immediately. They still operate a feed store, but don't mill or deliver feed.

The closure had two immediate and drastic effects on us. First, the Canadian mill to which Mark directed our business is 40 miles closer to us, but its price is \$47 a ton higher.

We simply cannot afford to pay more for an American ton (2,000 pounds) than we had been paying for a metric tonne (2,200 pounds). So we had to stop buying from Quebec.

For the rest of this season, our feed will come from U.S. mills. The price is about \$10 a ton higher than Moulee Vallee's, which means we must raise the price of Thanksgiving Turkeys by 54 cents a pound. We had hoped to hold the increase to 44 cents.

It also means that for the end of this season, our birds will not have feed free of genetically engineered grains. So, the first 70 of the 100 or so tons of feed that we bought this year was genetically clean, but the final 30 tons was not.

We will resume the search this winter for an affordable supply of feed free of genetically engineered grain.

We also lost our supplier of freezer film in which we wrap all our frozen items. The company, in Salem, N.H., simply disappeared. No phone, no website. We can buy from an alternative supplier, in Ohio, but the cost (surprise!) is more than a third higher.

**Make your
holiday
the best
it can be**

(Concluded from page 2)

When you buy a warehouse bird, you are leaving behind a pile of crap (literally) for someone else to deal with.

But on a smaller farm, we can manage our manure. When birds are on range, most of the manure never sees the compost pile because it stays on the ground. Then we come along, after the season, plow it under and sow plants that will absorb the high nitrogen from the manure, plants such as pumpkins, corn and broadleaves. The Turkeys the following season love to eat all of those plants, so

we are recycling in the truest sense of the word.

The Turkeys were great. Thank you very much. Would you put me on your list? I think we would like to plan on using you again next year.

—Buxton (business account)

Now, if I haven't convinced you to go with the better Turkey, then I probably can't.

If you are convinced, go to page 4 for the information you need to order. We hope to see you at holiday time when you come to pick up your Turkeys.

Fall lineup coming on strong: Chili, three sausages

With autumn comes our expansion of Maine-grown ingredients for some of our seasonal sausages and other items.

In September, we began seasonal production of our very popular Turkey sausage with apples and leeks. We use Maine McIntosh apples, Maine cider and Maine-grown leeks, which we always buy directly from the growers.

As soon as the cranberries are picked Downeast, we'll head to Calais to pick up enough to make cranberry-chestnut sausage right through the winter.

Both of those seasonal sausages are packed in loose packs at \$6.75 lb. and in sandwich-sized links at \$8 lb.

We are already making our smoked kielbasa, which comes fully cooked. We smoke it over Maine hardwoods. Kielbasa is \$10.25 lb.

And with fall and winter comes our chorizo chili, which we began making for market on Oct. 1. To our own chorizo, we add tomato sauce, kidney beans, diced tomatoes, onions and a bit of seasoning. The chili is cooked and needs only to be heated before eating. It is \$7.50 a quart and \$4 a pint. We make it every week.

We'll keep making the apple and cranberry sausages so long as the fruit supply holds out and demand holds up. When that ends, later in the cold months, the potato sausage will replace the cranberry sausage.

We are looking for new sausages for the spring and summer to replace one potato sausage and to replace our bratwurst and smoked Bavarian summer sausage, neither of which sold well this year.

CSA signups are lagging with the economy

We're not ready to declare that signups to our Community Supported Agriculture are a leading economic indicator. But as fears of another economic collapse grow, signups in CSA dwindle.

Through September, 85 households had bought shares this year, down 17 from the same time last year. Two of those have used up their shares and not renewed, and 83 remain active..

Those sharers bought in for \$17,100, down \$2,700 from last September.

The lower rate of signups is reflected in draws from CSA accounts, too. From July 2 through Oct. 1, the amount drawn from CSA accounts at the Crystal Spring Farmers Market has been lower than the comparable week in 2010 every Saturday but one, sometimes by more than \$200 in a week.

Of the 85 who have bought shares this year, eight were new sharers. Fifty sharers live in the Brunswick area and pick up their Turkey at the farmers markets there, while 35 generally pick up at our farmstore.

In a CSA plan, people pay for their food before receiving it. In our plan, people buy shares in one of the amounts shown in the adjacent box. We add interest to the share, and the sharer then draws any items she wants from our inventory.

The share lasts a year and can be renewed at any time.

We also cooperate with the Good Shepherd Food Bank in Auburn. We donate the unused parts of expired shares, including interest, to GSFB to distribute to Maine's 600 food banks.

Some sharers have even bought entire shares, to which we add interest, to donate to Good Shepherd or have asked us to send GSFB a designated

amount of Turkey from their share.

Last year, we shipped more than \$1,000 worth of Turkey to GSFB.

Finally, we offer work shares, too, in which people pay for a \$157.50 share by two days of farm work. The work is usually light construction, packing Turkeys at Thanksgiving, filling orders and cleaning. Always cleaning.

We will have workdays each of the last three months of the year. If you're interested but want more information, call Bob at 778-2889 or e-mail us at turkeyfarm@gwi.net. Workdays can be during the week or on weekends. We especially can use help during the Thanksgiving processing, Nov. 17-20.

The payouts		
Share Interest Yield		
\$100	4 %	\$104
150	5 %	157.50
200	6 %	212
250	7 %	267.50
300	8 %	324

CSA Order Form

221

Fill out and send to The Turkey Farm, 219 Mile Hill Road, New Sharon, Maine 04955:.

Please sign me up for the following share in Community Supported Agriculture:

(circle) \$100 \$150 \$200 \$250 \$300

Please sign me up for a work share in (circle): **October** **November** **December**

Name _____

Address _____

Town _____ State _____ Zip _____

Telephone _____ E-mail _____

The Local Thanksgiving Store is gearing up for you

To complement your Thanksgiving Turkey, we line up a variety of Maine-grown items for your festive table.

Sausages for stuffing and other uses.

We pack 10 Turkey sausages in the autumn. At least three of them are great for your stuffing.

Our mild breakfast sausage, our apple sausage with leeks and our cranberry sausage with toasted chestnuts are all popular with holiday chefs. All are \$6.75 lb. for the loose pack. (They come in links, too, at \$8 lb.)

We have several stuffing recipes available for you at our farmstore and at our pickup sites using these and other sausages.

Stuffing mix. Every year, we make up batches of a basic stuffing mix, using bread baked by the Livermore Falls Baking Co. and locally acquired organic spices. The two-pound stuffing mix is \$4 a bag

Stuffing bread. If you'd rather make your own stuffing from scratch, we will have whole wheat and white loaves of bread from Livermore Falls Baking

Potatoes. One of our most popular offerings every year is the Norwis variety potatoes we get from Green Thumb

creamy-fleshed large potato that is very versatile. One of its parents is the equally versatile Kennebec, an old Maine favorite.

Other veggies. For stuffing and for boiling, we'll have onions. Also for stuffing, celery. Neither is likely to be Maine-grown, but we offer them as a convenience to shoppers.

Cranberries. As usual, we'll have cranberries from Mingo's Berries in Calais. We'll sell those berries whole and make some of them into the popular Mama Stamberg's **cranberry relish** that we sell every Thanksgiving. And (see page 5), we'll use some of them to make cranberry-chestnut sausage.

Apples. We'll have whole apples from one or more Maine orchards, likely McIntosh and Cortland and maybe Northern Spy varieties.

Sorry, we can no longer sell apple cider. For real cider, you must, under federal and state regulation, buy directly from the farmer who pressed it. All the rest of us are allowed to sell only apple juice.

One unhappy truth with which we deal every year is that most of the people buying holiday Turkeys are one-time wonders.

We see them at Thanksgiving or Christmas and not again for a year.

However, our farm is a year-round business and as such produces a wide range of Turkey items so you can have tasty, varied and healthful animal protein year-round.

People who visit our farmstore and our stand at farmers markets already know that.

So, if you only see us once a year, stock up on other items, as well, from our year-round offerings.

For quick meals, we make breast cutlets to sauté, Turkeyaki to stir-fry, ground Turkeys for burgers and meatloaves and Turkey pies, chili and shepherd's pie. All will be available at our farmstore and at our pickup sites.

There are three kinds of breakfast sausage: mild, spicy and blueberry-maple.

And, meal sausages such as chorizo, garlic lovers' and Italian plus smoked andouille and smoked kielbasa.

Not to mention breast roasts and thighs for more involved meals. And drumsticks for soup stock. We also pack livers if you love that rich flavor.

So, remember, Turkey isn't just for the holidays. It's great food year-round.

The Turkey Farm
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778-2889

please forward