

The Turkey Times

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Despite price rises, we're staying gmo-free

By Bob Neal

Sometimes we feel a bit like Don Quixote, carrying on a crusade that we probably won't win. So it is with the use of genetically modified grains in Turkey feed.

Since 2001, we have used almost exclusively feed milled from grains certified to be free of genetic engineering. We have paid a premium of 9 to 13 percent for this feed and have absorbed some of that extra cost while passing some of it on to our customers. That is, you. See the article on page 2 about prices.

We have a couple of objections to genetic modification. First, the science isn't extensive, and the effect of the modified crops isn't very well tested. When engineers add flounder genes to tomatoes and the seeds from those tomatoes escape into the environment, what becomes of the flounder part? Does it swim into other plants in the neighborhood and make them part flounder, as well?

For centuries, breeders have improved varieties of plants by selecting for the



characteristics they find desirable. They'll select green beans that grow straight and then propagate them for use as dilly beans. After several generations, almost all the beans of that variety will grow straight and will stand up in a jar.

The same is true with animals. For 69 years, hatcheries have selected for breeding Turkeys with white feathers and large breasts and thighs. The result has been Turkeys with more appealing appearance, more reliable production and more breast and thigh meat from each bird. And, they are still Turkeys, although markedly different in appearance from the wild Turkeys that are now overrunning Maine.

And, here lies our second objection to genetic engineering. The change with genetic modification is that engineers are combining species to make a new entity. Corn now includes Bt (*bacillus thuringiensis*), a living organism and a pesticide. The advantage is that corn farmers don't have to spray for the insects that Bt controls. The downside, and we believe it is considerable, is that every kernel of that corn that you (or our Turkeys) would eat contains the pesticide.

It is no longer corn. It is Bt corn.

The Europeans, who don't allow genetically modified foods, call the
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Corn and the Loonie are driving up prices

Corn is everywhere in America's diet, and Turkeys are among the biggest corn eaters.

The subsidy-induced demand for corn to make ethanol has pushed the price of commodity corn to new highs. Our feed this season costs \$80 a ton more than we paid last year, an increase of 32 percent. Half the money we put into a Turkey is for feed, so a 32-percent increase raises our cost by 16 percent.

To complicate matters, the Canadian dollar continues to rise against the American buck. When we first bought feed from Moulee Vallee in Richmond, P.Q., the Canadian Loonie (dollar) was valued at 61 cents U.S. It has risen into the low 90s, and that has also increased

the price of our feed.

We use nearly 170 tons a year, so the difference is more than \$12,000 a year.

The price of corn has begun to ease, but the price for gmo-clean soy has risen to offset the decrease. And, the Canadian Loonie has continued to climb in value, meaning it takes more dollars to buy a Loonie.

We cannot absorb such an increase. So, on June 1, we raised prices. The increases average about 8.5 percent.

We may have to follow the example of Vermont's largest poultry farm and raise prices again this season. Misty Knoll Farm in New Haven, Vt., which also buys feed from Quebec, has had

three price increase and may have another before the season winds down.

While we raised prices, we are also trying to cut costs yet again. For example, we have taken on a new printer at a saving of about a penny a label. We use more than 15,000 labels a year. We are looking constantly for other steps we can take to avoid having to raise prices again this season.

A similar sharp rise in corn prices happened in 1997, and for a similar reason (government stepping into the private market). In 1997, we raised prices and promised to scale back if feed prices fell.

We kept that promise in 1998 and '99, and we'll keep this one.

It'll be Thanksgiving before you know it, so order early

Thanksgiving is Nov. 22, the earliest it can be, and we're starting the order process later this year. So, don't get caught napping.

We expect to have a plentiful supply — two of this year's four flocks are setting records for livability — of all sizes between 12 and 30 pounds. We may have a few lighter and a few heav-

ier, but we cannot count on that.

The size of Turkey you need depends on many factors but usually works down to what you want in the way of leftovers and the appetites of the eaters around your table. The Co-operative Extension recommends 1.5 pounds per person to leave some but not lots of leftovers. Many of our customers raise

that to 2.5 pounds to make sure they have plenty of sandwiches and Turkey tetrazzini the following week.

As last year, you may pick up your Turkey at our farm, at Orono or at the Crystal Spring Farm in Brunswick.

There are four ways to order.

You may complete the adjacent form and mail it to us. Second, you may phone us at 778-2889 and leave your name and e-mail (or postal) address and the size of Turkey you want. Third, you may e-mail us at turkeyfarm@gwi.net. Fourth, you may come to our stand at the Crystal Spring farmers market in Brunswick or to our farmstore on Route 27 in New Sharon to order.

We confirm all orders by e-mail or post. We do not confirm by telephone. Our experience is that phone confirmations are easily lost or forgotten, and we often save a Turkey for someone who doesn't show up.

Our farmstore will be open from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Sunday, Nov. 18, through Wednesday, Nov. 21. We'll announce the time, date and place later for the Orono pickup. Our truck and crew will be at Crystal Spring farm in Brunswick from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. on Wednesday, Nov. 21. At Christmas, the farmstore will be open on Dec. 22 and 23.

Holiday Order Form

Please reserve for me the following Turkey(s):

THANKSGIVING	Number	Pounds	CHRISTMAS	Number	Pounds
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Farm-fresh	_____	_____	_____	_____
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Smoked	_____	_____	_____	_____
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I will pick up at (Check one): The Farm Orono Brunswick

Name _____

Address (snail mail) _____

Town _____ Zip _____

E-mail address _____

Telephone No. _____

Farm projects await CSA signups and renewals

Twelve people have joined our Community Supported Agriculture project this year as new sharers. Fully half of them told us they had intended for some time to join but just hadn't got around to it sooner.

We expect many more readers of The Turkey Times and other customers have long intended to join but just haven't got around to it.

Now may be the time to get around to it.

We use the up-front money from CSA for, among other things, the projects we undertake each year to improve our farm. We still have three farm projects to complete this year.

We still need to build a shelter or two, to finish a water line to our brooder house and to replace and upgrade some equipment for our Fryeburg Fair concession stand.

Community Supported Agriculture benefits both you, the sharer, and us, the farm. You get the assurance of the highest quality Turkey you can buy and the satisfaction of shoring up Maine's fragile farm infrastructure.

You also can be certain that your concerns influence our farm decisions.

For example, we are now making Italian sausage after a sharer asked us for several years to consider it. The reception of this sausage, which is hotter than any of our other four sausages, has been very encouraging.

Another sharer gave us a great deal of information about genetically modified crops and urged us to avoid those grains if we could. (See the article on page 1.)

For our part, we get some money up front for projects to improve the farm, we get the assurance of a market year-round for our products and we get the satisfaction of knowing that people in the community support our efforts.

In our project, known as a debit or draw-down CSA, sharers buy in at an amount of their choosing. We add interest, and then the sharer draws against the share until it is used up. The shares last a year, if not used up sooner, and

balances remaining after a year can be rolled over into a new share if the sharer buys in again.

Our shares begin at \$100 and rise in increments of \$50. We add interest to the investment, and the interest rises by 2 percentage points at each increment.

Sharers may take their proceeds in any form they want. One sharer uses his investment to get Turkeys at Thanksgiving for his employees and then uses the remainder to buy sausage, cutlets and ground Turkey for his household. Another bought Thanksgiving Turkeys for his neighbors.

The Payout		
Share	Interest	Yield
\$100	6 %	\$106
150	8 %	162
200	10 %	220
250	12 %	280
300	14 %	342
350	16 %	406
400	18 %	472

Share sign-ups are running a little behind last year, but there have been encouraging signs. Two new sharers came in at \$400 (plus \$72 interest) and pick up Turkey almost every week at the farmers market in Brunswick. A renewing sharer raised his investment to \$400.

The average share is for \$179, which is a bit higher than last year, even though the number of renewals (38) is a bit below last year.

At this writing, we have 72 sharers. Eleven shares have expired without being renewed, and another 11 sharers have

used up their shares but haven't renewed the investment.

Twenty-two sharers bought in between Aug. 1 and Dec. 31 last year and will be up for renewal within the next four months.

In total, we have received \$8,950 in CSA investments this year. We have used that money to build two new pens (about \$2,500 each) and to buy timothy so farm manager Elaine Stevens could reseed five of our seven ranges. We also bought our largest flock of poult with CSA money (\$3,120).

We still need build at least one new shelter (about \$2,750) on a range that has no natural shelter and to buy some equipment (oven, tent poles, wastewater pump, etc.) for our Fryeburg Fair concession stand (\$2,600).

We need a total investment this year of about \$12,750 for these projects, so we are nearly \$4,000 shy at this writing.

So, if you've been thinking about signing on for CSA, there is no time like the present. You can make good use of our high-quality Turkey as we roll into fall and winter, and we can make good use of your investment to improve our farm and keep the Turkey coming for you.

Just fill out the form below and send it with a check or bring it to our farmstore or to the Crystal Spring Farmers Market in Brunswick..

And, thank you for your support.

CSA Order Form 174

Fill out and send to The Turkey Farm, 209 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 \$350 \$400 \$450 \$500
 (I have enclosed a check for that amount)

Name _____

Address _____

Town _____ State _____ Zip _____

e-mail _____ Telephone No. _____

We're staying with gmo-free grain and hope you'll help us stand the cost

(Continued from page 1)

result Frankenfood. Europeans, like us, fear that humankind is playing God in creating new organisms, a process previously left to nature.

Our third objection is that, so far, no genetically engineered crop has produced the higher yields predicted by the companies that own patents on these life forms. In fact, most gmo crops are producing lower yields than conventional crops.

Until this summer, Maine had been the only state that did not permit the use of Bt corn. But now, the state of Maine has

gone over to the dark side, okaying the planting of genetically modified corn.

It likely won't be long until nearly every field in Maine is contaminated with Bt corn. Drift of genetically engineered crops in other parts of the country has been reported to be extensive.

As the price of our gmo-free feed has risen, we have considered changing. In fact, we did switch for a month last fall, but that had to do with the service from our mill rather than with price.

This year, even before the Board of Pesticide Control knuckled under to

some large farmers and corporations, and endorsed the planting of Bt corn, we were investigating whether we should let go of our six-year commitment to ge-clean grains.

However, after discussing and debating the issue among ourselves (Marilyn Neal, farm manager Elaine Stevens and myself), we have decided to stay with genetically clean feed for this season. We are more comfortable with the safer grains.

Our sales results at the end of the year will tell us whether you prefer the genetically clean feed as well.

Getting the goods — the Turkey goods, that is

If you like our Turkey and want to know the most convenient way to get it, here are some suggestions.

First, our farmstore on Route 27 in New Sharon is open from 2 to 6 p.m. on Wednesday and Friday and from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. on Saturday. It is also open by chance, and for the rest of the season, one or another of us is almost always there.

Second, visit us between 8:30 a.m. and 12:30 p.m. on Saturdays through October at the Crystal Spring Farmers Market on the Pleasant Hill Road in Brunswick.

Third, order for delivery to home or workplace. We deliver east of the Kennebec River on the second Thursday of the month and west of the Kennebec on the third Thursday. We ask for a \$50 minimum order.

Finally, you can visit any of these 14 stores, all of which carry at least some of our 38 products.

BANGOR Natural Living Center 209 Longview Drive	BLUE HILL Blue Hill Food Co-op Green's Hill Place, Route 172	NEW SHARON Whitewater Farm Route 2 at the bridge
BAR HARBOR Town Hill Market Route 102	BRIDGTON Morning Dew Natural Foods 19 Sandy Creek Road	PORTLAND Food Works 47 India St.
A & B Naturals 101 Cottage St.	DAMARISCOTTA Rising Tide Food Co-op Business Route 1	ROCKLAND Good Tern Food Co-op 750 Main St.
BELFAST Belfast Co-op Store 123 High St.	ELLSWORTH John Edward's Market 158 Main St.	SCARBOROUGH Lois' Natural Foods 152 U.S. Route 1
BIDDEFORD New Morning Natural Foods 230 Main St.	KENNEBUNK New Morning Natural Foods 3 York St.	

The Turkey Farm
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theturkeyfarm.com
778-2889

please forward