



The Turkey Club UK

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Newsletters: May, November

November 2024

Dear Turkey Club supporter

Having the shows back again is just wonderful, catching up with old friends and exhibitors. I took the Club stand to the Federation Show in September and the National Show in October. Sadly there were no turkey entries at the Federation but the report from our National judge is below. Also are updates on processing, a mischievous stag, show results and an avian contact study.

This Newsletter is being sent not only to those who kindly paid their Club fee in 2024, both new and previous members, but to those who last paid in 2021 following the pandemic lockdown then the avian influenza lockdown. It is hoped that some of the previous members will re-join for 2025! This can be done via Paypal on our website or directly to our bank. At the end of this Newsletter there are membership forms (with paying details, also to download on the website) and it would be really helpful if those re-joining would fill in a form and send to me so that our database is correct and keeps us within GDPR.

Malcolm Thompson is kindly organising the FAnGR number survey of turkeys for DEFRA. No personal details will be included, just the numbers and sex of all the colours. Please co-operate with providing these so that DEFRA appreciates the numbers - there was not a turkey survey provided last year and we need to make sure numbers are included on the poultry list.

Thank you for your support, keep up with biosecurity to protect your birds and do contact me with any queries.

Victoria

From your Chairman

What a change over the last year! While we were still a long way from where we were with Covid and bird flu, it is great to see shows beginning to flourish. Also, another big step forward is the revival of the print version of *Fancy Fowl* magazine. Hopefully, enough people will subscribe and it will be able to keep going supporting all branches of the fancy.

If you are at all involved with a local poultry show, please do encourage it to put on turkey classes and when they do, try and support them. I know that showing turkeys is hard work and not for everyone, but unless the general public see the birds, they won't be able to see how fascinating and entertaining they are. Have a happy Christmas and a successful New Year.

Peter Hayford

Nearly 500 years of a treasured fowl in England: President of the Turkey Club UK, **Janice U. Houghton-Wallace** looks back at the turkeys' introduction

The turkey is by no means just a Victorian introduction for the Christmas table for it is actually believed to have evolved from a pheasant-like ancestor during the Pleistocene Era¹ which ran from 1.8 million years ago up to the end of the Ice Age. Although the turkey could have been resident in either North America or Asia it is Mexico where first references to the bird are found as far back as the fifteenth century.

It was the Aztecs who originally domesticated the turkey, prizing it for its feathers as well as its meat and so cherished was the bird that a festival was held where turkey eggshells were spread on the streets, celebrating "the goodness of the god who had given them this fowl."² For years to come explorers and

historians wrote about this 'strange bird' often described as a 'kind of peacock' because of the similarity of the courtship display.³

During the early 1500s the turkey arrived in Europe and Spain was the most likely first port of call for ships returning from the New World. From Spain the turkey was brought to England, with William Strickland being credited as the most likely person responsible for the introduction.⁴ A farmer's son, he had gone off to explore the New World with Sebastian Cabot and a tale has it that strange looking birds were found with the Native American Indians and beads were exchanged for some of them. It was young Strickland's task to look after the birds during the voyage back and for this he was allowed to sell the turkeys when they reached port, realising four pence each. Although there is no actual provenance for determining this it is quoted in various sources - as is the year 1524 although 1526 has also been mentioned.

Strickland lived in Boynton Hall in East Yorkshire and in Boynton church the famous carved lectern is in the shape of a turkey, rather than the more usual eagle. Strickland's connection with the turkey is also strengthened by the fact that when he was granted a coat of arms in 1550, a 'turkey-cock in his prime' was chosen as the crest. To make certain that it was as he wanted, a strutting turkey cock was drawn, possibly at one of the meetings which Strickland would have had with a herald. The original manuscript of this drawing is still in The College of Arms in London.⁵

Farmers in East Anglia first recognised the value of this 'new' bird. Attracting great interest and with flocks being bred and developed at a rapid pace, the resulting turkeys were given the name of the one of the counties in which they were reared - thus evolved the Norfolk Black.

In those early years in England the turkey was only reared for the table of the rich and privileged members of society. In 1541 Archbishop Cranmer prohibited turkey being served in excess of one dish of turkey cocks on State occasions. The female turkeys were considered too precious to cook but by 1544 the turkey had become the Christmas dish for farmers and one Norfolk farmer who himself reared turkeys, Robert Cooke of Mileham, was also granted the crest of a turkey by Thomas Hawley, Clarenceux King of Arms in 1556.⁶

In *Five Hundred Points of Good Husbandry*, published in 1573, Thomas Tusser writes about turkey being a culinary luxury for the prosperous Englishman at Christmas:

Beefe, mutton and pork, shred pies of the best,
Pig, veal, goose and capon, and turkey well drest...⁷

By the second half of the seventeenth century turkey was being eaten by a wider section of society, not just the elite. Francis Willughby in his book on ornithology published in 1678 said of the bird: '*The turkey being now so well known and become so common everywhere in Europe, needs no very minute and operose description.*'⁸

In England, as in other countries, the turkey also had royal support. George II (1683 - 1760) put his seal on the delicacy by keeping three thousand turkeys in Richmond Park for the royal table.⁹ However, when George III came to the throne in 1760 he ordered that all the turkeys be cleared from the Park.

Until the middle of the Twentieth Century turkeys would have been the original standard 'single-breasted' turkeys but just as with rare breeds of other livestock commercial breeding to increase the meat ratio per bird came into play. Breeding to produce more breast meat introduced a much wider selection of weights of bird for the public to buy in the supermarket and butchers. Bernard Matthews brought this to the fore and became a household name for all types of turkey products. Today, although commercial turkey products are available everyday, the fresh free range turkey at Christmas also has a major market and the Kelly Turkey is one of the top franchises.

The standard turkey still has a place though, not only as a meat bird but also as an exhibition bird, egg producer and pet. Turkey Club UK was founded in 2001 to promote the conservation of this amazing bird and Richard Marriott a descendant of William Strickland was one of the early members.

With interest in the history of the turkey and the bird's modern day importance to food production it is hoped that the turkey will continue to flourish for the next five hundred years.

References:

1. R.D.Crawford, "Turkey", in *Evolution of Domesticated Animals*, edition by Ian I. Mason, London, Longman Group Limited, 1984
2. J. Alden, *old Foods in the New World, Natural History*, 5/94, pp 76-79
3. Peter Martyr, *De Orbe Novo*, 1520 -23 pp 72-75 English translation by Sabine Eiche
4. M.I.Stollard, "Christmas in Yorkshire. The Food They Ate", *Dalesman*, vol.32,no 9, Dec. 1970, pp 761-762
5. College of Arms, London, *Ms Miscellaneous Grants* 1, f.58
6. College of Arms, London
7. I. Beeton. *The Book of Household Management*, London, 1861
8. F. Willughby, *The Ornithology of Francis Willughby*, London, 1678
9. Archives, The Royal Parks, London.

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National Show judge's report

It was an honour to judge the TCUK Club Show turkeys at the Lincolnshire Showground. Five years had already passed since my last visit to England. Coronavirus and bird flu have prevented exhibitions from being held in recent years, but hopefully in the future, exhibitions will be held annually again.

The National Show was held on October 19 and 20. Only seven turkeys, from five different varieties, participated in the exhibition. In addition, turkey eggs were judged in the 1 and 3 egg categories.

The Champion Turkey was the Slate turkey stag and the second was the blue turkey. Three turkey eggs were chosen as the best eggs and went on to become Champion Eggs overall!

Hopefully more breeders will bring their turkeys to be judged next year, and also will see many new breeders at the show. Lincolnshire is a wonderful place and there is enough to see in Lincoln for several days. Special thanks to Peter and Victoria for their hospitality and all their help. Best regards, **Pasi Hellsten**



Champion Club Show turkey, D&D Wakeham.
Photo: Pasi Hellsten



Champion Eggs, John Tickle. Photos: Chris Parker

Class 1110 Bourbon Red stag: 1st Nathan Potts
Class 1114 Slate stag: 1st D&D Wakeham, 2nd D&D Wakeham
Class 1116 Narragansett stag: 1st D&D Wakeham, 2nd Peter Hayford
Class 1117 Narragansett hen: 1st Peter Hayford
Class 1118 White stag: 1st D&D Wakeham.

The National Show will also be at Lincolnshire Showground and on 9th and 10th November, 2025.

The Federation Show will be on 20/21 December 2025 at Stafford Showground.

Cornish Federation Show

There were only six entries in the Cornish Federation Poultry Championship Show on Sunday 10th November 2024, overall Best Turkey and Best Male went to D & D Wakeham, Best Female, a Bronze, went to Sue Jones, Best Turkey Eggs was won by Peter Hayford. There was a Slate stag and a pair of Narragansett owned by Derek and Daniel Wakeham, the Narragansett Stag was 1st and Best Stag and also Best Turkey in Show. There was also a good Black hen owned by Peter Hayford.

It would be lovely if more turkey enthusiasts could increase entries into these classes and get a greater interest for them. A pair of Bourbon Red and a pair of Slate turkeys were purchased at the show and headed from Cornwall up to Scotland which was excellent.

There was a great turn out of poultry in general, plenty of chickens, ducks and geese, several members of the public attended the show which was good to see.

Sue Jones

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How do you process your spare turkeys for the table?

Matthew Harvey

It's fast approaching "that time of year" again, and those of us who raise turkeys for meat will be eyeing the growers to decide which to cull, and when to do the deed!

Many people in TCUK have been processing their own birds for a lot longer than me... But I imagine there are some who have never killed a turkey at home, or are less than happy with how it went last time, so I thought it may be a good idea to share some of the things I've learned and offer support to anyone starting out.

It goes without saying that no-one enjoys killing birds which they have spent all year caring for, but it doesn't have to be an ordeal. For me, it's essential that we retain and promote the utility aspect of our turkeys if we are to ensure a long term future with amateur poultry keepers.

It requires some planning to make sure things go smoothly, and things will be MUCH easier if you can get someone to assist. Things to consider:

- The physical aspect of handling, restraining and killing a large bird.
- The biology of a turkey... They have a hyper-mobile and tough neck with a surprisingly small cranium!
- The Legal and moral aspects... There are legal requirements on us to prevent animal cruelty, and I want to be sure I've not caused unnecessary suffering.
- Clearing up the mess and disposing of animal by products. There will be blood - also an incredible amount of feathers plus feet, head, and innards. Feathers can be composted cleanly, but if you are killing more than few birds you need a safe and legal way to get rid of the messy bits.
- If any of these points puts you off, then please research commercial slaughterhouse options are in your area - there are surprisingly few these days.

I kill dozens of birds each year (not just turkeys) so I researched official advice on best practice, and then invested in a captive-bolt stun gun. After a while I got myself assessed by DEFRA for WATOK (Welfare At Time Of Kill) - this was quite involved and not cheap, but it has given me confidence in what I am doing.

****Health & Safety Notice****

Home slaughter of poultry involves potentially dangerous operations. Please be careful- you are responsible for your own safety.

Stages I follow for turkeys:

1. Withdraw feed for 14-18 hours (I remove feed mid-afternoon the day before if I'm killing early in the morning)
2. Restrain the bird gently (the easiest way is a turkey sized kill cone, if I'm alone I also quickly tie their feet above the cone)
3. Stun the bird (this is a legal requirement which some people skip. I always stun, but suppose a quick artery cut/bleed-out seems the kindest alternative)
4. Kill/bleed: cut the carotid (neck) arteries in one clean cut and bleed for 2minutes minimum
5. Dry Pluck while warm
6. Hang by feet/ legs for 1 week in cool place or large fridge @ 5-10°C (see FarmFresh Turkey standard for more information)
7. Eviscerate and butcher as required
8. Note: I am told that stages 3 + 4 can be replaced by killing with a headshot (9mm garden gun, .410, or possibly a .22 air rifle?) but I've not tried and it seems risky.

More detail and online resources are listed below. I'm not an expert but I have lots of experience and I am good at finding new information, so if you just have a few questions then feel free to PM me for more detail - about how to get set up, or improve your home processing.

I might even be able to assist killing a few birds if you live local to me (West Dorset) and want to get a feel for how to do it calmly/effectively- PM me through Facebook Messenger.

Information, legislation & advice:

Humane Slaughter Association: <https://www.hsa.org.uk/>

Slaughter for home consumption GOV.UK: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/slaughter-poultry-livestock-and-rabbits-for-home-consumption>

FarmFresh Turkey processing standards:

<https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5fd36bd4e90e076637bb5a4b/tsg-traditional-farmfresh-turkey.pdf>

Stunning equipment:

This seems the most cost effective captive bolt gun. Be warned: this is effectively a 9mm shotgun with a captive bolt instead of pellets - your hands are at serious risk!

Blitz-Kerner Captive Bolt Stunner (buy from <https://www.333shop.com/en/shop/product/13-blitz-kerner-captive-bolt-stunner-5148>)

<https://www.333shop.com/en/shop/product/295-green-cartridges-blitz-kerner-50-pieces-5309>

Processing Supplies: Storey Poultry Supplies Ltd., Unit 53C Notley Enterprise Park, Raydon Road, Great Wenham, Colchester, Essex CO7 6QD. (+44) 01473 823598, 07879 496970.

storeypoultrysupplies@btopenworld.com www.storeypoultrysupplies.co.uk

A very helpful and experienced company with both new and refurbished equipment, plus spare parts.

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Fiona Wowra's Turkey

New member Fiona took a handsome turkey out the other week to a show, he gobbled at the top of his voice all the way there, killed his box and escaped to climb around the car, and got dirty. She got him out first and dumped him in his pen where he continued to gobble driving everyone nuts, but attracted lots of people to the tent as he could be heard half way across the showground and all the kids wanted to see him. He didn't shut up all day and was right next to the secretaries' desk (apparently turkeys are joining call ducks at the far end of the tent next year). Best Turkey though, so he got a reprieve from the bad books.

Coming home he's on the back seat as his box was beyond repair, gobbling well then half way home the turkey goes quiet, oh great he's gone to sleep. Oh no, when she gets back and unloads him she discovers he'd stolen her Haribo Tangtastics out of the boot so was quiet as up to no good. Back to his shed in disgrace as that was the final straw. He is a thief - normally he has stolen phones, keys, bank cards, hats, in fact anything he can get his beak around, then people wonder why he's called Brian the Nob.

They're brilliant creatures and highly amusing even if they do lack a brain and common sense.



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Bristol University Avian Contact Study

This is an online survey to gather data on human contact with birds to understand avian influenza transmission.

Study data

How will we use the information you provide?

Your anonymised data will be used by researchers to understand contact patterns between domestic and wild bird(s) and people. We will use the data to draw conclusions and make policy recommendations via written reports. No individual will be identified in any of the output or reports. The information you provide will not contain any personal identifiable information and will be stored safely and securely.

What will happen to my data?

Your involvement in the study will remain confidential. This information will only be available to research staff and national bodies which monitor whether research studies are conducted properly. Your study data will be anonymised. This means that any identifying information about you will be removed. It will not be possible to identify you from any aspect of documentation or reporting for this research study. At the end of the study the data will be made "Open Data". This means that it will be stored in an online database so that it is publicly available.

What is Open Data?

Open data means that data are made available, free of charge, to anyone interested in the research, or who wishes to conduct their own analysis of the data. All data will be anonymised before it is made available and therefore there will be no way to identify you from the research data.

Why Open Data?

Open access to research findings and access to data is considered best research practice and is a requirement of many funding bodies and scientific journals. As a large proportion of research is publicly funded, the outcomes of the research should be made publicly available. Sharing data helps to maximise the impact of investment through wider use, and encourages new avenues of research.

Link to survey:

https://chdredcaplive.bris.ac.uk/redcap/surveys/?s=XA743XXPLF79FHLL&_gl=1*1ozrkjj*_ga*NTc4NjM3MDg4LjE3MzEwNDk1MTM.*_ga_6R8SPL3HLT*MTczMTA0OTUxMy4xLjEuMTczMTA0OTc3Ni41NC4wLjA

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What on earth is this?

Turkeytail fungus (*Trametes versicolor*)



The turkeytail is a small, tough, bracket fungus that grows in tiered layers on dead wood - mainly hardwood, such as beech or oak. It is very common and can be found throughout the UK on rotting stumps and branches. Fungi belong to their own kingdom and get their nutrients and energy from organic matter, rather than photosynthesis like plants. It is often just the fruiting bodies, or 'mushrooms', that are visible to us, arising from an unseen network of tiny filaments called hyphae. These fruiting bodies produce spores for reproduction, although fungi can also reproduce asexually by fragmentation.

The turkeytail is a bracket fungus that forms semi-circular caps around tree trunks. The caps are thin and tough, with very clear, velvety, concentric rings of colour. Colours are variable mixes of brown, yellow, grey, purple, green and black, but the outer margin is always pale - either cream or white. The caps are often layered together, forming tiers.



Turkey Club UK

Send to: Hon. Sec. Mrs. V. Roberts BVSc MRCVS
Heather Bank Barn, Hillings Lane
Menston, Ilkley LS29 6AU.
Email: generalsecretary@turkeyclub.org.uk

APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP OR SUBSCRIPTION RENEWAL (delete not applicable)

Name.....

Address.....

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.....Postcode.....

Telephone.....Email.....Date.....

Colours kept and approximate numbers.....

Source of stock, if known.....

Newsletters are issued May and November.

Annual Subscriptions: Junior (under 16) £5, Adult £10, Family £15, Corporate £50, payable on 1st December.

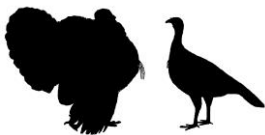
Please make cheques payable to Turkey Club UK and from Europe, send Euros as cash.

BACS or a Standing Order: Barclays, sort code 20-77-85, account number 23570320, putting your name as the reference.

Or pay £11 (adult) £16 (family) or £5 (child under 16) via Paypal with www.turkeyclub.org.uk

Your consent is needed for future communications. For consent, please mark here

Thank you for your support



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