

**Top 5 MI Counties
Total Laying Hens & Pullets (2000)**

- 1) Allegon
- 2) Ottawa
- 3) Huron
- 4) Kalamazoo
- 5) Tuscola

POULTRY

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Background Information

Poultry are birds raised for their meat or eggs. The species includes chickens, turkeys, ducks and geese. Most of the poultry produced throughout the United States are either chickens or turkeys. The only major meat animal native to North America is the turkey. The South-eastern states have the most egg and broiler (chicken) production.

Chickens

A male chicken is called a rooster and a female chicken is a hen. Their offspring are called chicks. Broilers are either male or female chickens that are raised for their meat. They hatch in about three weeks from fertile eggs in hatcheries. They are fed until they are six to seven weeks old and weigh four to five pounds. Then they are sold to market. Some chickens, called roasters, are fed to 10 to 12 weeks and weigh eight to nine pounds before they are ready for market.

Broilers and roasters are raised in large buildings called broiler houses. They have water and feed such as corn, grain sorghum and soybeans available at all times.

Layers are hens which produce eggs for food. Eggs produced by layer hens (or layers) do not contain an embryo. From hatching until five months of age, young layer chicks are called pullets. Pullet farms raise chicks until they begin laying eggs, at about six months of age; then they are called hens.

A hen lays about 300 eggs in one year. Then some hens go through a period of rest called molting which lasts about three months. After molting, a hen will lay eggs again for about nine months, but will produce fewer eggs.

Hens are kept in laying cages to keep them and their eggs clean. The cages usually are tipped slightly so the eggs roll onto a moving belt that automatically collects the eggs. Grains such as corn, milo, soybeans and oats are fed to layer hens, but they also are fed extra calcium to make the egg shells strong. Hens are taken out of production when they are nearly two years old.

In 2000, Michigan's egg production was 1.6 billion eggs for a total sales of almost \$57 million.

Turkeys

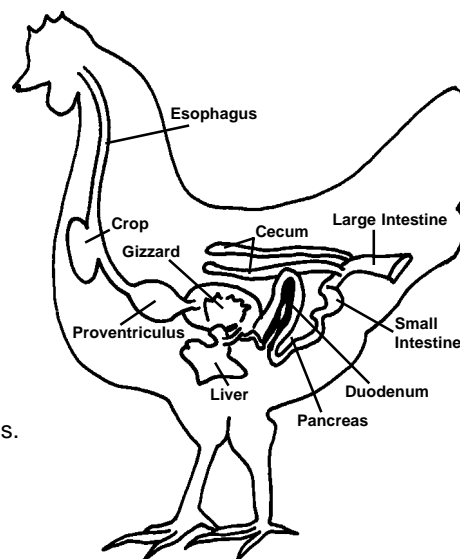
A male turkey is called a tom and a female turkey is a hen. Turkey hens that are used to produce fertile eggs begin laying eggs at about seven to eight months of age; it takes about 28 days for a turkey egg to hatch. Young turkeys are called poults.

Newborn toms and hens are separated and placed in brooder houses for six to eight weeks, where they have feed and water at all times. Then they are moved to outdoor pens in warm weather or to grower houses where they are fed until they go to market.

Often brooder and grower houses can hold about 25,000 birds at one time. Toms are ready for market when they are between 18 and 22 weeks of age and weigh 30 to 38 pounds. Hens are ready for market when they reach 13 to 14 weeks and weigh 13 to 14 pounds. Like broiler chickens, turkeys are fed grains such as corn and soybeans.

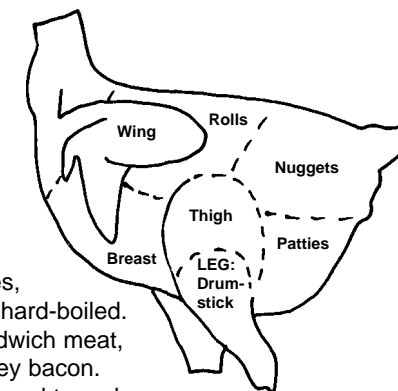
Digestive Tract

Chickens and turkeys do not have teeth; they use their beaks to pick up food. They swallow pieces or whole grain and small stones called grit, and store it in the crop. The grain and grit then goes through the proventriculus (stomach), and into the gizzard where the grain is ground into small pieces. Next it moves through the small and large intestine. The waste is then excreted.



Products

Broiler and roaster chickens provide food such as drumsticks, wings, chicken breasts and chicken nuggets. Broilers also provide by-products that are used to make noodles and candy bars. Eggs from layer hens are used as ingredients in such foods as cakes and cookies, or they can be scrambled, fried or hard-boiled. Turkeys provide such food as sandwich meat, drumsticks, turkey breast and turkey bacon. Ducks and geese provide "down" used to make bedding and clothing. They also provide meat. Poultry feathers can be processed as a source of protein for livestock feeds.



Did you know . . .

- Eggs are also one of today's best buys with eggs averaging only \$.60 per pound.
- Americans eat 45 million turkeys on Thanksgiving Day alone.
- Farm turkeys have wings, but they are so heavy they cannot fly.
- There are more chickens in the world than there are people.
- Fresh eggs can be refrigerated for at least 4 - 5 weeks, and hard cooked eggs can be refrigerated for up to ne week.



For information on other programs and materials available, please contact: Michigan Farm Bureau, Attn: Deb Schmucker, 7373 W. Saginaw Hwy., Lansing, Michigan 48909; PHONE: 800-292-2680, FAX: 517-2-323-6604.