



November, 2013 Food For Thought

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Greetings,

When searching for pumpkins this fall I was reminded of the fickleness of conditions impacting agricultural success. One farmer I know had to cancel a long standing tradition of community jack-o-lantern carving and viewing because their pumpkin crop had failed. A few towns away another farmer was plowing pumpkins back into his field because he had so many he couldn't sell them all. What was the difference? The rainy spring impacted producers differently depending on the type of soil, topography and plant varieties they were dealing with. There are a lot of conditions that can be controlled, but weather is not one of them.

Turkey Facts

- In 2012, Minnesota raised 46 million turkeys, more than any other state in the U.S. North Carolina was second with 36 million raised.
- Total U.S. production of turkeys as measured by the USDA that year was 253.5 million.
- Turkey production in the U.S. reached its peak in the mid-1990's at over 300 million birds.
- The National Turkey Federation (NTF) estimates that approximately 45 million turkeys are eaten at Thanksgiving, 22 million at Christmas, and 19 million at Easter.
- Ninety-five percent of Americans surveyed by the NTF eat turkey at Thanksgiving. The average weight of turkeys purchased for Thanksgiving is 15 pounds; that's about 675 million pounds of turkey consumed in the United States on Thanksgiving Day.
- Only tom turkeys gobble. Hen turkeys make a clicking noise.
- Like all birds, turkeys do not have teeth; they use their beaks to pick up food. They swallow pieces of whole grain and small stones called grit, and store it in the crop.
- Domesticated turkeys cannot fly. Wild turkeys can fly for short distances up to 55 miles per hour and can run 20 miles per hour.
- Turkeys have approximately 3,500 feathers at maturity.
- President Abraham Lincoln proclaimed Thanksgiving a national holiday in 1863,





Once again I became appreciative of the effort that farmers put in and the risks they take to produce our food, fiber, and other agricultural products. As the turkey farmer who I interviewed for this newsletter said, "We don't do it for the money!" So, at this time of year when thoughts start to turn toward the holidays, and Thanksgiving, I'd like to remind everyone to take time to thank the farmers that you know as well as the ones that you don't know. If you feel inclined, write a letter to the editor of your local paper and share your appreciation for those who work in agriculture. When you sit down for your Thanksgiving meal, remember those who produced the food on your table. Talk to friends and colleagues who may not be as agriculturally aware. So often the work of farmers is taken for granted. Let's work to make that less common.

In this issue we'll take a look at turkeys and turkey farming in New Hampshire. Big companies like Butterball, Cargill and Purdue aren't the only sources of turkey for your Thanksgiving dinner. Dozens of farmers in New Hampshire raise and sell fresh and frozen birds for both holiday and year round consumption. *The Weekly Market Bulletin*, produced by the NH Department of Agriculture, Markets and Food (NHDAMF) usually publishes a list of farms that sell turkeys in the November issues. You can also go to the NHDAMF website to find a listing.

There are more turkey related activities than just tracing a hand and turning fingers into feathers and a thumb into a head, though that's fun for younger kids. See the resource list for activity ideas. Also check out the October 2011 issue of *Food for Thought*: <http://miniurl.com/icUJ> where we focused more on the history of turkeys, wild turkeys and the evolution into turkey farming.

However you choose to integrate turkeys or other types of agriculture into your

supposedly as a response to a campaign organized by magazine editor Sara Joseph Hale. In 1939, President Franklin Roosevelt moved Thanksgiving Day forward one week, as it is presently celebrated.

Raising Turkeys in NH

Most people purchase a Thanksgiving turkey from a grocery store. However, there are farms in New Hampshire where consumers can get a fresh, locally raised bird and meet the farmer who raised it.

Monique Labreuque from the Hermit Brook Farm in Sanbornton is one such farmer. She has been raising turkeys for over 20 years and currently has a flock of about 200 birds that are being prepared for harvest. I spoke with Monique to learn a bit about what it's like to raise turkeys in New Hampshire.

NHAITC: How did you get started raising turkeys?

ML: I started raising them for my family. Then we sold a few to friends. The interest grew from there. I've had as many as 750 in a year. There is a lot of demand for local turkeys.

NHAITC: Who is your primary market? Do you sell a lot of them whole sale?

ML: No, all my sales are retail, directly from the farm. My turkeys are really good and popular. I have folks who come up from Massachusetts. I even ship some to Georgia and Washington. Once someone has had my turkey they come back. My primary marketing is word of mouth. Selling to a store decreases the profit and the margin isn't very big to begin with.

NHAITC: Do you buy the young birds?

ML: Yes, the young are called poults. I buy them and raise them for 17-20 weeks. In that time the females (hens) will get to be 15-22 pounds, the males (toms) will grow to between 15 and 31 pounds.

NHAITC: What breed do you raise?

ML: I raise the broad breasted turkey. It has white feathers. I've found they have the best meat to bone ratio and produce a really tasty bird. People love them.

NHAITC: How are they harvested? Do they have to be taken to a slaughter house?

ML: No we process them here on the farm.

NHAITC: How many people work on your farm?

ML: Just two of us.

lessons, I hope you'll have an enjoyable month and upcoming holiday season.

Best wishes,

Ruth

Ruth Smith, Statewide Coordinator
NH Agriculture in the Classroom

Turkey Resources

abcteach: craft ideas, worksheets, games focusing on turkeys and thanksgiving, including some on nutrition

<http://miniurl.com/icUI>

Enchanted Learning: Craft ideas and learning activities related to turkeys and other Thanksgiving icons.

<http://miniurl.com/e0LB>

Family Education: fun activities for home or school including quizzes, crafts, explorations.

<http://miniurl.com/icUO>

Minnesota Turkey Board - facts, trivia and educational information about turkeys and turkey farming.

www.minnesotaturkey.com

NH Department of Agriculture - A list of some of the turkey farmers in New Hampshire

<http://miniurl.com/iavs>

National Agricultural Statistics Service - Statistics and maps for turkey production.

<http://miniurl.com/iavo>

NHAITC Calendar

November 3-4, Meredith

NHAITC: What are some of the challenges associated with raising turkeys?

ML: The biggest challenge is predators. We use dogs to protect the turkeys (and our meat goats as well). Between that and electric fencing it works pretty well. We still have to keep them in at night and during the hawk migration season though. Otherwise we would lose a lot of birds. The other challenge is the cost of feed. I get my feed directly from a mill that mixes it for me, but the price continues to go up and up. It really cuts into our profit.

NHAITC: What is the biggest reward?

ML: It's not financial, that's for sure, though it used to be. The best part is having long time customers that come back year after year because they enjoy our product, or getting new customers that are so thrilled with the birds. I get calls from people who say, "That was the best turkey I ever ate." The turkey can really make or break someone's holiday dinner and it's nice to know we are helping to create memorable holiday meals.

To read another story of a multi-generational turkey farm in Concord NH go to:

<http://blakesallnatural.com/about/our-humble-story/>

NH Science Teachers Conference
Join us for a workshop on Chickens & Eggs
www.nhsta.net

November 8-9, Durham
NH Farm Bureau Annual Meeting
- We're holding a silent auction. Contact us if you you'd like to donate a product or service. www.nhfarmbureau.org

November 14-16, Manchester
National Grange Convention
Join us at the Idea Fair
www.nationalgrange.org

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Forest Pest Outreach Project

As mentioned in previous newsletters, NHAITC will be working with the NH Department of Agriculture, Markets and Food, through a grant from the USDA, to produce educational materials related to exotic and invasive forest pests that threaten our maple sugar trees, landscaping industry and the forest health of the state. In October I attended the NH Camp Director's Association annual conference and conducted the first program as part of this Forest Pest Outreach Project (FPOP).

Why is an organization with "Classroom" in our title working with camp directors? As educators know, classrooms don't just have walls and exist in our public and private schools. Summer camps are amazing places of learning and in some cases their active time of year makes them more in line with agricultural and natural seasons for particular topics. This is the case with the Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) and the Asian Longhorned Beetle (ALB), our primary focus with this project. Camp directors were introduced to the idea that aware

ness about these pests is a key step in reducing their spread. The EAB has been found in Merrimack County, the ALB is not in NH . . . yet.



Over the course of the winter and spring educational materials will be created to help students become beetle watchers, learn about insect life cycles and the impact of insects on forest and agricultural resources. These materials will be available for educators including classroom teachers, homeschool parents and camp counselors. Updates will be provided when the materials are ready for distribution but if you are interested in introductory materials or information, let us know.

Notices

NHAITC Seeks New Coordinator

The Board of Directors for NHAITC is looking to hire a new part-time coordinator. Based in Concord, this is a 20 hour per week position. Duties include school outreach and classroom presentations, curriculum development, event planning and management, office administration, coordination of fundraising. Knowledge of agriculture required. For a complete job description visit: http://www.agclassroom.org/nh/job_description.pdf. To apply, send letter of interest and resume by November

12, 2013 to nhagriculture@agr.nh.gov.

AFBFA Essay Contest

The American Farm Bureau Foundation for Agriculture is holding the Agriculture in a Growing World grant and essay contest. This program gives one school in each state the opportunity to receive a classroom set, 20 copies of the AFBFA Book of the Year Winner: *The Man Who Fed the World* as well as its curriculum free of charge.

Schools are then invited to participate in the Ag in a Growing World Essay Contest. Students can win cash prizes up to \$500, and schools can win up to \$1,000.



This is an excellent opportunity, not only for the school to receive free resources, and potentially win prize money, but also for us to continue to build awareness, understanding, and a positive public perception of agriculture through education.

Applications must be received no later than November 15th so we can get the materials to the schools for their spring semesters. See <http://miniurl.com/e3gl> for details or contact Julia Recko at 202.406.3737 or ask via email at juliad@fb.org.