

the broiler chickens I also raise. The turkeys are more active and seem to require more room to roam. They also tie up the pen for 20 weeks as opposed to 8 weeks for the broilers.

Depending on what other facilities or fencing methods you have available, another disadvantage could be the cost of materials and labor to build the pens. I estimated that building a pen from scratch would cost about \$270 (\$150 in materials and 20 hrs labor @ \$6/hr.). Even with a life expectancy of 5 years, this would come out to a cost of approximately \$2.70/bird raised over the lifetime of the pen (\$270/20 turkeys x 5 yrs.). I will use the pens for early season lettuce production as well as for an early batch of broilers, before the turkeys are put out on pasture. This will make the pens more cost effective for me.

The extra management time moving the pens was negligible in my opinion (it was an enjoyable chore to see the turkeys mowing down the fresh grass when moved), especially when weighed against the time necessary to clean out the barn.

In my case, since this was permanent pasture, I think there was a lot of room for improvement in the rotational grazing scheme. I say this because at times the turkeys were following sheep and were grazing regrowth without an adequate resting time for the pasture. This wouldn't be a problem if the area was to be planted to crops, but from the pasture's point of view the lack of rest between grazings isn't good rotational grazing.

Conclusion

Because I like turkeys and they fit into the overall scheme of things at The Farm Between, I plan on raising 100 turkeys again next year. I am still looking for a better method for containing them on pasture (I haven't had good luck with electric fencing), but I am not optimistic that I will find one. The hoopouses fit into my operation, and I will probably use them again next year for turkeys. I may bring the turkeys into the barn for the last few weeks after the pastures have gone by to reduce grain consumption (the extra grain used for energy against the elements in November) and to reduce the crowding. I will also try to move them more often in response to the amount of pasture they are consuming.

As seen by the partial budget, raising turkeys in Vermont at this level is not highly profitable, but may fit in well to a farm that has some of the necessary infrastructure (pasture, fencing, etc.) and is looking to diversify and spread workload into November.

Outreach (to date)

- On 9/12/94, the UVM Pasture Program and the VT Dept of Agriculture organized a pastured poultry workshop at The Farm Between. Approximately ten people took part in a lively discussion and pasture walk from 10am-12pm.
- WCAX TV in Burlington filmed part of an "Across the Fence" news program featuring pastured poultry at The Farm Between. The program will be shown in 1995.
- I am scheduled to lead a workshop on pastured poultry at the Northeast Organic Farmers Association Winter Conference in Montpelier, VT on 2/25/95. I will present the results of the SARE project as part of my presentation.