### SOP No: 25  
**SOP** Turkeys  
**Scientific Name:** Meleagris gallopava  
**Category:** 2, 3, 4, 5  
**Approval Level:**  

**Category 2:** School Principal may delegate  
- Observation of particular animal behaviours, e.g. oestrus, parturition  
- School performance by outside agencies that have animals as part of their exhibits  
- Organisations bringing animals to school (such as Delta Society programs, RSPCA or PetPep).  
- The appropriate care of classroom pets.  
- Non-invasive measurement of body weight, body condition by visual assessment or condition scoring, growth, body proportions, pulse or blood flow, respiration, skin temperature (non-invasive), age by dentition, scrotum and testicles (palpation).  
- Familiarisation activities.  
- Administering water as a treatment.  
- Collection of wool, milk, faeces or urine samples (non-invasive).

**Category 3:** School Principal may **NOT** delegate  
- Non-invasive measurement of body condition by ultrasound  
- Measurement of mild dietary effects (provided the normal nutritional needs for the life stage of the animals are met), high/normal protein, high/normal energy, high/normal fat, palatability  
- Taming/gentling.  
- Training for competition or showing.  
- Tethering animals.  
- Collection of saliva.  
- Measurement of body temperature (invasive).  
- Administering drench or capsules orally.  
- Loading and unloading animals onto transporters.  
- Showing animals at school and away.  
- Pregnancy detection by external ultrasound.

**Category 4:** Animal Ethics Committee  
- Administering intraruminal, subcutaneous or intramuscular injections.  
- Administering winged capsules orally.  
- Administering intravenous injections or intrauterine pessaries.  
- Beak trimming.  
- Oestrus synchronisation.  
- Microchip tagging.  
- Commercial activities (for example growing turkeys for commercial sale).
Category 5: Animal Ethics Committee

Activities requiring Category 5 approval - Category 5 comprises many husbandry techniques which have the potential to be painful or distressing to the animal and require a level of expertise or supervision to ensure that adverse events do not occur.

- Collection of faeces, ruminal fluid or blood (invasive).
- Artificial insemination.
- Semen collection.

Authority:

Government Schools – Department of Education and Children’s Services Animal Ethics Committee

Independent and Catholic Schools - Non Government Schools Animal Ethics Committee

Authority Approval Date: 1 August 2010

Disclaimer:

This document may be updated at any time. You should check the web site regularly to ensure that you are meeting the most recent recommendations. If you note any concerns with the information provided (inadequate, incorrect) please contact the relevant AEC (Refer to bottom of Standard Operating Procedure).

Licensing Requirement: Not applicable

Compliance Requirement: The keeping of this species requires approval from the School Principal or the AEC. It is recommended that this Standard Operating Procedure be followed as a minimum in the provision of appropriate care and housing for this species.

General Information:

Physical Attributes:

- **Size:** to one metre tall
- **Weight:** male 8-15 kg, female 4-8 kg
- **Weight at birth:** 40-60 gm
- **Incubation period:** 28 days
- **Sexual maturity:** well grown, seven-months old pullets
- **Healthy characteristics:** body temperature: 40-42°C Heart rate: 180-340 beats/minute

Behaviour:

Turkeys are alert and active with an erect carriage. They cannot fly far and often scratch and peck as they investigate the surroundings. Turkeys may rush at objects and, if injured, may become cannibalistic.

Environment:

- **Space** - Stocking density should be reviewed periodically and adjusted as necessary for age, breed, strain and type of turkey, colony size, temperature, ventilation, lighting, quality of housing and occurrence of disease and cannibalism. Floor space under a hover brooder should be at least 90 cm² for each poult. For birds up to six weeks of age, provide at least 900 cm² a poult. From eight weeks of age, the minimum intensive space required for rearing is 0.6 m² per bird. Grassed runs should have at least 15 m² of pasture per bird. Rotate pastures between batches. Provide a shed with 1.2 m² of roof per bird and allow 25 cm of roost space per bird.

- **Movement and exercise** - Turkeys appreciate a ranging situation but can be successfully raised in more intensive situations. Model Code of Practice for the Welfare of Animals: Domestic Poultry (3rd edition) provides advice on the space allowances for turkeys.

- **Temperature** - For day-old poults under a brooder, measured 10 cm above the ground at the rim of the brooder, the temperature,
taken with a black bulb thermometer, should be 38°C. Every three days, lower the temperature 1o to 2oC to reach 21oC when the poults are four to six weeks of age.

The poults are the best indicators of temperature. When it is too hot, they will disperse and they will huddle if it is too cold. When poults are weaned, the preferred temperature range is 20–28oC. Temperatures below 10oC and above 32oC cause stress.

- **Light** - Birds kept in sheds must have reasonable light and not be kept in dark. The birds should experience a light and dark cycle.
- **Ventilation** - Avoid draughts and chilling winds. Ventilation is required to prevent ammonia build-up in intensive situations. Ammonia causes as much distress to poultry as it does to humans. To prevent ammonia building up to the level where it becomes unpleasant, reduce the number of birds in a given area, clean out the litter and improve ventilation.
- **Shelter** - Sufficient shelter is required to protect birds from extremes of climate such as temperature changes, wind, rain and direct sunlight.
- **Bedding** - Use clean, dry litter of rice hulls, shavings from untreated timber, straw or sand. Cleaning little cleaning is required if the litter is deep and kept dry. Make sure that equipment, such as nest boxes, is hygienic so that the disease risk is minimised.
- **Nesting** - Suitable nesting material such as clean, dry sand, rice hulls, straw or untreated wood shavings should be provided. A nesting box should have a minimum size of 0.5 x 0.5 x 0.5 m and accommodate three or four birds. The nest should be reasonably dark and of sufficient size to isolate one bird from another, so that egg damage and aggressive behaviour from some birds during nesting time are avoided.

**Feeding:**

- **Type** - Commercially prepared turkey crumbles for poults, growers and adults.
- **Quantity** - Ranges from a few grams per day for poults to up to 250 grams per day for adults.
- **Regularity** - Ad lib preferred, at least twice per day, in the morning and evening.
- **Essential dietary needs (variations)** - 28% protein ration for the first four weeks, 24% for the next four weeks and then reduced to 20% until grown. When the birds are young, use medicated rations to counter blackhead disease.
- **Water** - Must be cool, clean and fresh and in sufficient quantity at all times.

**Breeding:**

**Handling:** Turkeys need to be handled calmly and with care to prevent distress and injury to the animals. Avoid chasing, which agitates the turkeys, and causes them to pile up in corners.

**Hygiene:**

**Signs of illness:**

- diarrhoea
- nasal discharge
- sneezing
- nervous signs or paralysis
- inactivity, head under wing, feathers ruffled or isolated from group
A pale or purple comb
frequent shutting of eyes
little response when touched or pushed, or often pecked at by others.

A failure to thrive or grow is another sign of illness.

Treatments:
If the cause of ill-health is unable to be identified and corrected, assistance should be sought from a veterinarian familiar with turkeys. Treatments must be documented in the appropriate records.

Euthanasia:
When an illness or injury is such that recovery is unlikely then the animal must be euthansed by a veterinarian. Any death must be reported to the Animal Ethics Committee using the appropriate form (see section relating to ADVERSE EVENTS). Forms are available on the relevant websites – see contact details below.

Disease prevention:
Disease control methods and internal and external parasite control programs should be developed in consultation with a veterinarian or Primary Industries and Resources SA. Treatments must be documented in the appropriate records.

Disposal/fate planning:
Turkeys can be sold privately, at auction or consigned to an abattoir. Carcasses must be disposed of in accordance with local council regulations.

Holiday and weekend care:
Turkeys need to be monitored, checked and fed regularly over weekends and holiday periods. Care should be taken to more regularly check shedded birds in times of extreme heat and cold. Be mindful that essential service failures such as power and water can have catastrophic affects in a very short time.

Approved activities:
Observation, breeding, farming

Resources:
Websites:
www.pir.sa.gov.au
www.sardi.sa.gov.au
www.library.usyd.edu.au/VEIN/links/poultry.html

Texts:
NSW Dept of Agriculture and Fisheries, Agfacts: Raising Turkeys, Australia.

Contact:
DECS Animal Ethics Committee
Department of Education and Children’s Services
Phone: 8207 1806

NGS Animal Ethics Committee
For 2010
Association of Independent Schools of SA Inc
Website: http://www.ais.sa.edu.au > School Management & Governance > Animal Ethics
Phone: Executive Officer, 8179 1400

For 2011 & 2012
NGS Animal Ethics Committee
Catholic Education Office

* Kindly sourced from the SAEC – Schools Animal Ethics Committee of Western Australia. [http://www.animalethics.wa.edu.au](http://www.animalethics.wa.edu.au)