

## AEC STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES

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| <b>SOP No:</b>                  | <b>25</b>   |
| <b>SOP</b>                      | <b>Turkeys</b>  |
| <b>Scientific Name:</b>         | <b>Meleagris gallopava</b>  |
| <b>Category:</b>                | <b>2, 3, 4, 5</b>   |
| <b>Approval Level:</b>          | Category 2: School Principal may delegate<br>Category 3: School Principal may <b>NOT</b> delegate<br>Category 4: Animal Ethics Committee<br>Category 5: Animal Ethics Committee   |
| <b>Authority:</b>               | <b>Government Schools</b> – Department for Education and Childhood Development Animal Ethics Committee<br><b>Independent and Catholic Schools</b> – Non-Government Schools Animal Ethics Committee  |
| <b>Authority Approval Date:</b> | 1 August 2010   |
| <b>Last update</b>              | 22 January 2019   |
| <b>Disclaimer:</b>              | <i>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</i> |
| <b>Licensing Requirement:</b>   | Not applicable  |
| <b>Compliance Requirement:</b>  | 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 cm<sup>2</sup> for each poult. For birds up to six weeks of age, provide at least 900 cm<sup>2</sup> a poult. From eight weeks of age, the minimum intensive space required for rearing is 0.6 m<sup>2</sup> per bird. Grassed runs should have at least 15 m<sup>2</sup> of pasture per bird. Rotate pastures between batches. Provide a shed with 1.2 m<sup>2</sup> 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 1°C to 2°C to reach 21°C when

## AEC STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES

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 20–28°C. Temperatures below 10°C and above 32°C 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. 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

## AEC STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES

- little response when touched or pushed, or often pecked at by others.

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

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| <b>Treatments:</b>               | 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.  |
| <b>Euthanasia:</b>               | When an illness or injury is such that recovery is unlikely then the animal must be euthanased 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. |
| <b>Disease prevention:</b>       | 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.  |
| <b>Disposal/fate planning:</b>   | Turkeys can be sold privately, at auction or consigned to an abattoir. Carcasses must be disposed of in accordance with local council regulations.   |
| <b>Holiday and weekend care:</b> | Turkeys need to be monitored, checked daily 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.      |
| <b>Approved activities:</b>      | Observation, breeding, farming   |
| <b>Resources:</b>                |  |
| <b>Websites:</b>                 | <a href="http://www.pir.sa.gov.au">www.pir.sa.gov.au</a>   |