

At Lititz area farm . . .

Turkey is king or 'a la king'

By Melissa Piper
BRICKERVILLE - At the John Sensenig farm at Lititz R1 near here, turkeys are king or eventually a la king depending on how one views the matter. Sensenig's began raising turkeys some 25 years ago and since that time have seen their operation grow and multiply. The Lititz area farmer raises 35,000 turkeys a year and depends on a good market at Thanksgiving, Christmas and Easter for his profit. Many of his "gobblers" go to markets in New Jersey and New York to be sold on a live basis or as whole birds. Fredericksburg and Douglasville in this state are the prime targets for his birds that go into processed and whole meat. Sensenig receives the turkeys (both hens and toms) at one day of age from hatcheries in Michigan and Ohio. They are trucked to the farm and put in pens to begin their reign as "king of the farm."

Notorious for their bad habits in getting started to grow, Sensenig echoed his feelings, "they're difficult to get growing but once they take off they're okay."

"Disease is always a problem but we do the best we can," the producer added. While disease is a problem for almost any

producer, Sensenig also had another worry on his hands this year when a tornado blew away portions of one turkey house.

Sweeping over the Brickerville area in early October, the freak storm ripped away portions of one turkey house roof located on a hill above the farm. Fortunately, only a few birds were lost.

Sensenig still thinks that turkey is the best buy per pound of protein on the market today.

"Turkey is a lot lower than most meats per pound," he noted, "and there is little waste to the bird."

"There's a lot of good meat to the turkey and for its quality it's cheap."

Sensenig claims that turkeys are friendly and are inquisitive once their fear is quieted. The producer can amble slowly among a pen of thousands swooshing them away with a friendly sweep of his hand. A portion of his birds will soon be gone finding their way to many a Thanksgiving and Christmas meal while others, still young, are awaiting their turn to eventually become turkey a la king resigning their positions of as king of the Sensenig farm.



Thousands of turkeys line one of four pens at the John Sensenig farm near Lititz. Sensenig raises some 35,000 turkeys a year marketing most for the holiday season.

Lancaster Farming Photo by Melissa Piper



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