

Konhaus Farms produce champion turkeys

By DIETER KRIEG
MECHANICSBURG — Starting with a kitchen sink for a processing facility, and the back porch as a sales room, Paul Konhaus has seen his turkey operation grow to the point where it is totally diversified and complete.

Turkeys are a way of life for the middle-aged and exceptionally modest man. He started with just a few back in the 30's, and today raises, processes, and markets 30,000 per year.

What's more, they have won quite a few prizes. At this year's Farm Show, for example, Konhaus Farms showed the grand champion — a 41-pound 6-ounce tom which was later donated to the Crippled Children's Hospital at Elizabethtown.

Farming a total of 500 acres, of which close to 200 are rented, Konhaus raises all of his own corn. A group of 10,000 birds will eat up to 24 tons of feed per week just prior to marketing when they've reached the desired

size. In addition to corn, his feed consists of soybeans, concentrate, and additives. Corn is stored and dried on the farm and the entire ration is mixed right on the premises.

The turkeys are brought in when they're a day old and are shifted from one house to another according to age. There's more to it than what one would first assume, according to Konhaus' son, Paul Jr. He explained that lots of new strains of birds come out each year and keeping up with them is a task in itself. But it must be done if high quality turkeys are the goal. The family's large collection of trophies, ribbons and plaques — some of which are on display at the farm store — attest to the sharp eyes involved in the Konhaus turkey business.

The younger Konhaus noted that a strain is picked on the following criteria: broadness of breast, strength of legs, bloodlines, and body conformation. Each year the idea is to get a turkey which is broader and has better conformation than birds did the year before.

Konhaus Farms' manager for the past 30 years, Gerald Brown, claims there's not much to raising good turkeys. "Good common sense," he says, is what most of it is. But that's not to say that there isn't a lot of work involved or that problems never arise. There are enough of both to keep everyone on the farm on his toes.

The first few weeks of raising a new flock of poulters are the most difficult. Diseases are more likely to occur during early stages and maintaining proper temperature is highly critical, explained Brown.

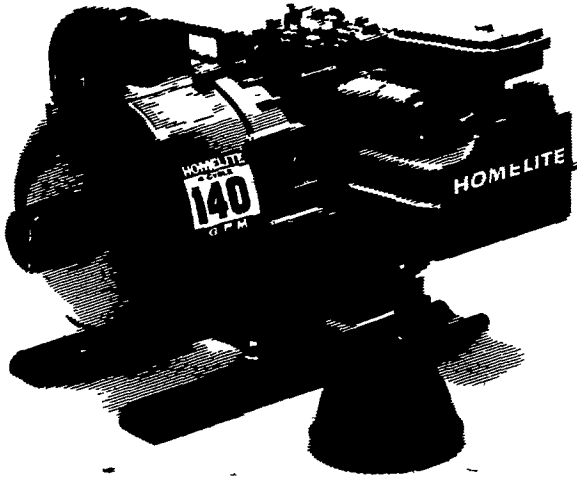
Day-old poulters are raised with the aid of heaters which maintain a temperature of 100 degrees Fahrenheit. After the first week the thermostat is taken back 10 degrees every seven days until a level of 60 to 70 degrees is reached. After four to six weeks the young birds are moved to another barn, and from there again to the next, according to age. At the end of an 18 to 20 week



Paul Konhaus, Jr., left, and Gerald Brown, manager of the Konhaus Turkey Farm for 30 years, display one of their larger turkeys. Their grand

champion at the Farm Show weighed 41 pounds and six ounces and was later given to the Crippled Children's Hospital at Elizabethtown.

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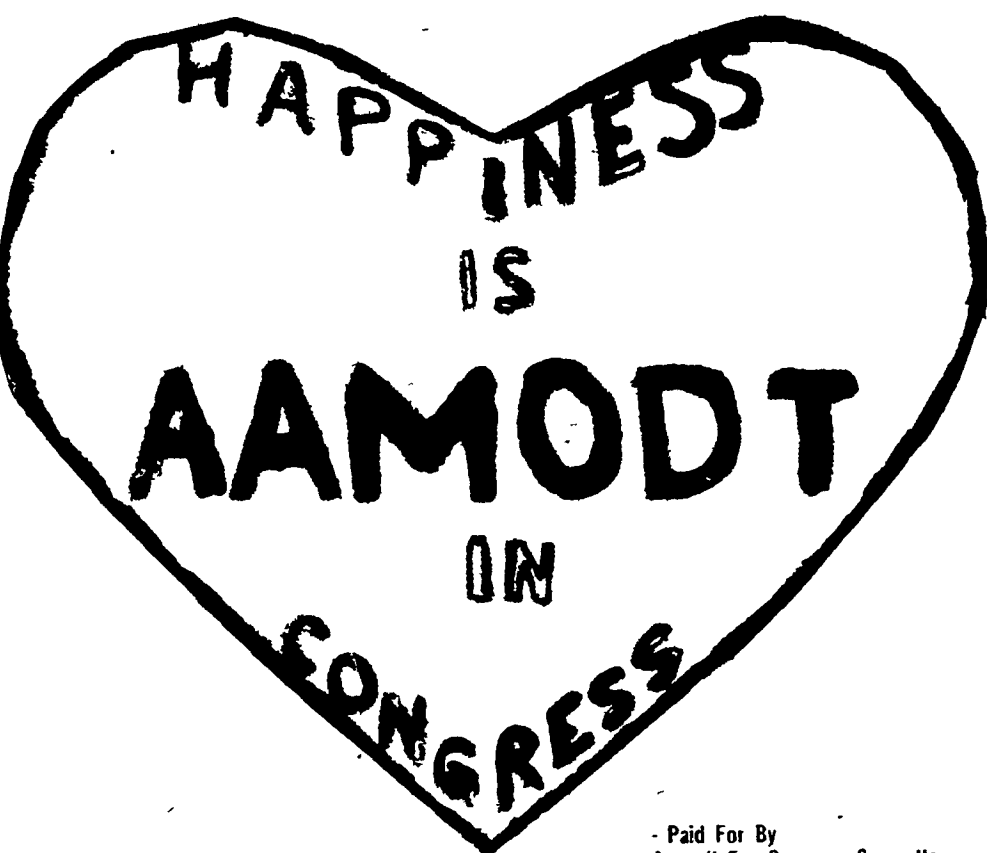
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period, most turkeys are ready for market. None ever stay on the farm for longer than 24 weeks.

A dressed medium-size hen from the Konhaus Turkey Farm will weigh 12 to 14 pounds, Paul Jr. related. Toms weigh in at 16 to 18 pounds. Large dressed hens range in weight from 14 to 18 pounds, while toms tip the scales from a low of 20 to a more than 40 pounds, such as the grand champion at the Farm Show last year.

Asked how they go about choosing turkeys which will do well at shows, Brown acknowledged that the first step is to start with a good strain. "They should have good legs, and good feed in front of them all the time — anybody can do it," he said modestly. Paul Jr. added that they walk through each of their five barns daily and when an individual bird strikes their eye, it's ringed. Show entries are then selected from that group. Carcass entries are all picked by hand. This year Konhaus had 30 live and dressed turkeys entered in the Farm Show.

The 1975 turkey market was described as having

been a lot better than the year before, Brown noted, adding that the market is currently getting better all the time and 1976 looks good. To meet the demand for them, Konhaus starts poulters at three different times of the year. The first group of 10,000 birds was started late

last month and most of them will go into freezers. A second flock comes in about the middle of June which means they'll be ready just in time for Thanksgiving. In late July the poulters intended for Christmas dinner arrive on the scene.

Corn is first choice

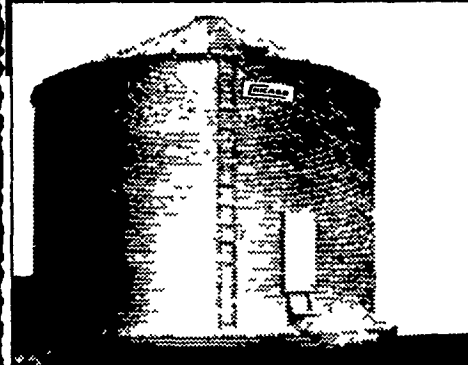
ANNAPOLIS - Maryland farmers, who reaped a record corn harvest last year, say they will go in for even more plantings for 1976. That is the highlight of the April 15th prospective plantings report issued last week by the Maryland Crop Reporting Service and State Department of Agriculture. Farmers planting intentions polled April 1st show that some 700,000 acres of corn will be planted in Maryland this year, up some nine percent from 1975.

Correspondingly, farmers say they plan to cut their soybean plantings some 19

percent to 260,000 acres and cut their barley acreage some five percent to 107,000 acres for 1976 from the acreages they devoted to these crops in 1975.

Three other key crops covered in the report issued show little or no change over 1975 planting intentions. Oats acreage for this year is estimated at 28,000, the same as in 1975; tobacco plantings are estimated to hold the same as last year at 23,000 acres and hay acreage at 255,000 represents a two percent increase over last year.

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