

Pheasant production due at turkey farm

TROUT RUN — Pheasant production in Pennsylvania will get a boost in 1981 when the former turkey farm in Lycoming County is converted to a facility for raising additional ringnecks.

In August of 1979, the Game Commission decided to limit the production of turkeys at the game farm while at the same time stepping up the wild bird trap-and-transfer program.

It was indicated that when the Game Commission deemed it necessary, farm turkey production would be eliminated and the facility would be converted to other uses.

This year the number of farm turkeys produced was reduced from the 6000 level

of the past to just 4200 birds. With the recent rapid expansion of the wild turkey range, game managers had a difficult time this year finding suitable release sites where the 4200 farm birds would not be in conflict with wild populations.

As a result of this year's experience, game managers had to consider two options in looking at future plans for the facility: either convert the farm to the production of other game birds, or further decrease the number of turkeys produced.

Regardless of the numbers of birds produced at the farm, the annual operating cost at the Lycoming County facility is about \$210,000. Producing 6000

turkeys rounds out to an approximate cost of \$35 per bird.

Production of 4200 birds in 1980, at the rate of previous costs, rounds out to an approximate cost of about \$50 per turkey for this year.

If the Game Commission produced and distributed only 2000 birds in 1981, the cost per turkey would approach \$105, because of fixed operating costs.

The Game Commission said it feels this cost is unreasonably high, and an unjustifiable use of the sportsmen's dollars.

Game farm turkeys have been produced in the past in an effort to "sweeten the pot" and provide birds for hunters in locations where

they are not normally found in nature. Game farm birds were not produced with the idea that they would reproduce in the same numbers as true wild turkeys.

Turkeys which come from game farms, produced under "controlled" conditions, lack those characteristics necessary for survival and reproduction normally found in wild birds.

When game managers want to expand turkey populations in suitable habitat devoid of birds, the best method is to trap wild turkeys in areas of abundance and transfer the birds into the new or potential range.

Unlike birds which have come from game farms, wild birds take hold in natural surroundings much more rapidly and reproduce at normal rates.

Past experience and research in many states show the relative merits of the two methods of turkey production.

For instance, over a period of years, thousands of game farm turkeys were released in the South Mountain area of southcentral Pennsylvania. After release of game farm birds was stopped for several years, the area again was devoid of turkeys.

Then, several dozen "wild" turkeys were trapped in other areas of the state where the birds were abundant, and released in the South Mountain area. The birds became established quickly, reproduction soared, and today there are self-sustaining flocks of wild turkeys in the South Mountain area.

Horse backpacking guidelines offered

LITITZ — Horse backpacking provides a great opportunity to get back to nature. However, basic skills and knowledge can make it a more enjoyable experience.

Members in the national 4-H horse program, conducted by the Cooperative Extension Service and supported by the American Quarter Horse Association and the Insurance Company of North America, suggest these guidelines for planning a horse backpacking trip:

- Begun with essential equipment until you become an experienced packer. A pack saddle, good quality pad or blanket and panniers are the foundation of a pack. Remember weight carried in saddle bags should be kept to a minimum, rarely exceeding 10 pounds.

- Pack horses should be fed daily. Feed can be carried in the bottom of each pannier to keep the load's center of balance as low as possible. If pack trips are planned for relatively open spaces, ample amounts of grass may be available for grazing.

- Make sure water will be available for your horses. Hard-working horses need up to 10 gallons of water a day. For each rider, carry at least one quart of water, preferably two.

- The type of food carried depends on length of the trip. Most fresh foods should be used within 48 hours. Canned foods combined with non-perishable products, like biscuits, pancake mix, dried rice and dehydrated foods last longer, but a combination of freeze-dried, canned and dehydrated products is suggested.

- Cooking and eating utensils should be lightweight, versatile and durable. Remember to pack matches, liquid detergent, can openers and disposable products, like paper towels, and toilet paper. Also, carry an axe, shovel and cooking grates.

- Each packer should remember to bring a bedroll, including some kind of mattress or pad for the sleeping bag.

- A well-stocked first-aid

kit is essential, and it should contain items for most minor emergencies.

- When selecting pack horses for the trip, remember they should have good confirmation and be interchangeable with those that are ridden. Pack horse should have quite temperament, be well-trained, strong, surefooted and particularly sound in their feet and legs.

Horse backpacking is one of the many activities of members in the horse program. Other projects include participating in horse drill teams and horse shows-showing and judging, line driving, competitive trail riding, hot horseshoeing and sharing skills in a horseback riding program for the handicapped.

The trap-and-transfer procedure is an ongoing part of the state's overall turkey management program, and will continue in the future. In the past, many of the birds were taken from the northcentral counties and relocated in southcentral Pennsylvania, as well as eastern and western sections of the state.

But, there may be occasions in the future when birds will be trapped in sections of abundance in eastern or western Pennsylvania and released in the northcentral area, as populations fluctuate and the need arises.

In 1979, more than 100 birds were trapped in the wild and transferred to understocked ranges.

Generally, the key element in the trapping of wild birds is weather. Last winter, being a relatively open and mild period, was not particularly good for trapping operations.

Given any kind of a break in weather and other conditions this winter, the Game Commission should be able to further increase the number of birds taken in the wild and moved to potential habitat — habitat which is likely to support self-

sustaining populations of birds in the future.

While it may cost considerably more than a hundred dollars to trap and transfer a single wild turkey, the benefits far outweigh the costs. Two hens and a gobbler transferred in the wild can reproduce an entire new population.

The reproductive ability of three wild birds — trapped and transferred — couldn't be matched by twenty farm-raised turkeys which — even if they escaped the hunter — often don't make it through the first winter.

This year the Game Commission produced a record number (223,200) of pheasants at four game farms, but the demand for additional ringnecks cannot be met at the four facilities currently in use. The four farms are over-taxed, and more birds could not be produced.

Game managers are hoping that the conversion of the turkey farm to ringneck production will mean an additional 35,000 to 40,000 pheasants during the next few years. When the conversion is fully completed at the farm, it may even be possible to produce more than the 40,000 pheasants currently envisioned.

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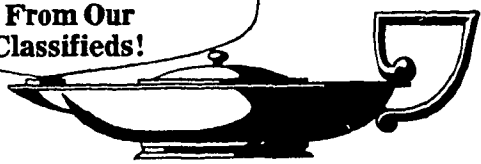
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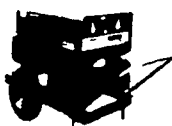
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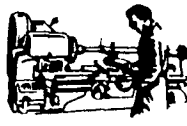


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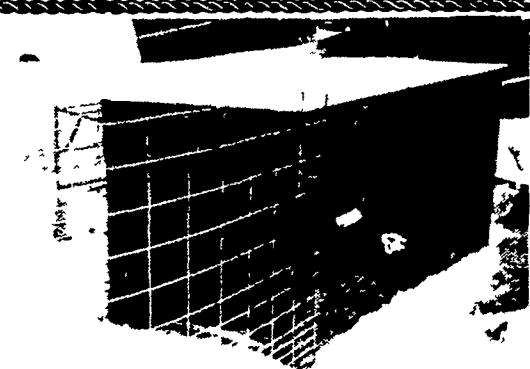


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