

Homestead Notes

(Continued from Page C2)

The Zimmermans use propane gas as their fuel source, and he says, "We use a lot of energy."

The birds are housed in about 15 buildings, with the newest buildings insulated as they are built. Three people work in the operation, and some part-time help is hired in the summer and at loading time.

All Zimmerman's turkeys are processed into Swift's Butterball turkeys at the processing plant at Birdsboro, near Reading, the original plant operated by Zimmerman and four other producers.

Zimmerman began in the poultry industry with laying hens and added about 500 turkeys one year for the fresh market. He said, "I was fascinated by turkeys so we slowly changed over to them. They are relatively easy to take care of if the conditions are right. Things can be difficult if they're unhappy or if their health isn't good."

He pointed out that turkeys are not susceptible to disease as some poultry, but added, "We keep people out of the pens."

His affection for the big white birds comes out when he says that occasionally people want to purchase a live turkey just to have around a farm. He says, "Turkeys are rather noisy if they are tame. They are not afraid of people. They hang around buildings and act as a watchdog."

Zimmerman has been active in supporting this industry and is presently serving as chairman of the Pennsylvania Turkey Council which is part of the Poultry Federation. He is a member of the former Neppco, and has served on its Board of Directors. In 1978 he was named Turkey Industryman of the Year for his achievements and contributions.

Zimmerman is optimistic about the future of the poultry industry, saying, "There is quite a future in the poultry industry, especially if the price of grain goes up. With some promotion I think the turkey industry has a good future."

This year experts had predicted a rather grim year for growers, and, although it started out poorly, Zimmerman said it hasn't turned out all that bad. In the south chickens and turkeys were lost in the heat and in some egg-producing operations fertility dropped off. Locally,



Leroy Zimmerman checks the feed in an automatic feeder in his finishing house at East Earl. Zimmerman grows out 135,000 birds annually to provide a year-round market of frozen birds.

though, Zimmerman says they only lost a few birds and the weight gain was not quite up to normal.

Pennsylvania ranks eleventh in turkey raising, with 5,300,000 birds grown annually. Zimmerman points out that Minnesota and California are large turkey-producing states with North Carolina recently becoming another important state in the industry. He said both the climate and the lower cost per land helped the turkey industry grow rapidly in North Carolina, where he buys his poultts. Zimmerman notes, "We are a deficit area. There's a lot of turkeys coming into Pennsylvania."

Zimmerman farms about 83 acres and grows some grain, but not nearly enough for his entire operation.

Along with other producers, Zimmerman is happy to

have all those Thanksgiving turkeys consumed, but he would like to have families consider the regal turkey as a possibility for year-round nutritious, economical and delicious meals.

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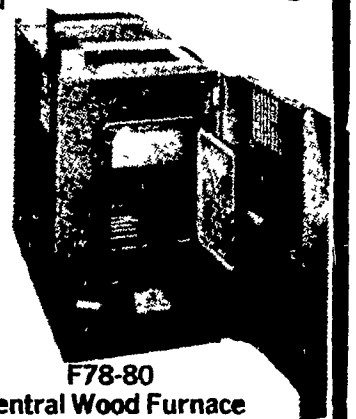
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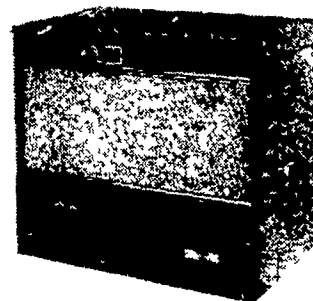


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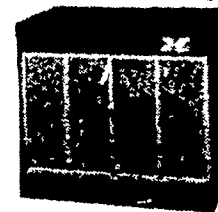


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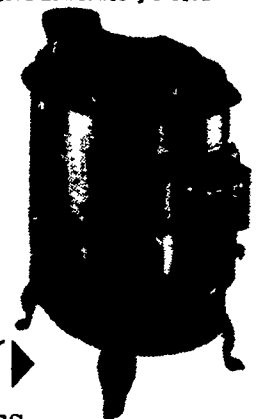
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