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EC733 Revised 1936 Shelter Sheds for Turkeys

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Extension Circular 733

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The University of Nebraska Agricultural College Extension Service
and United States Department of Agriculture Cooperating
W. H. Brokaw, Director, Lincoln

Shelter Sheds for Turkeys

J. H. Claybaugh

—COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE

The modern system of brooding turkeys by artificial methods in large units has developed a need for safe roosting quarters. When young turkeys are old enough to be moved to alfalfa or grain-stubble fields, they have outgrown the need for brooder-house protection. A simple roosting shed and night corral for shelter and protection are needed until they are marketed.

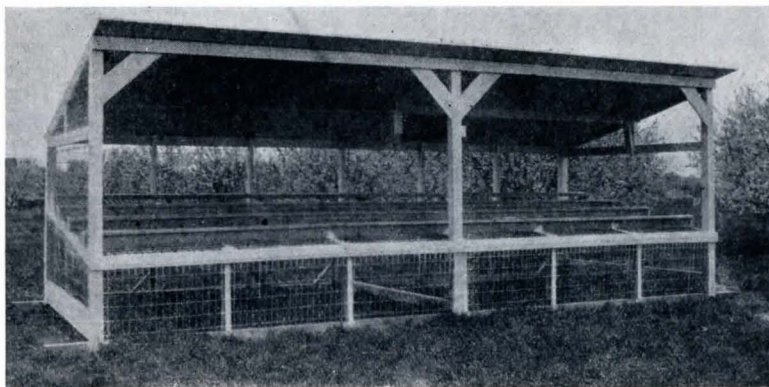


FIG. 1.—A good range shelter shed for turkeys.

REQUIREMENTS FOR A SUMMER SHELTER SHED

1. Sufficient roosting space for the flock.
2. Roosts with wire screen below to prevent access to droppings.
3. A night corral which serves a double purpose of protection from enemies as well as preventing stampedes following a storm or other disturbance.
4. Protection from summer storms and early fall snows. Uncovered and unprotected roosts have formerly been popular. Risks of heavy losses during storms account for the desirability of roof-protected shelters.

SIZE

The 8' x 20' shelter shed shown on the cover page provides 80 lineal feet of roosts, when outside roosts are placed 15 inches from rear and front, and other roosts are centered 22 inches apart. During the first part of the period turkeys are on range, not more than six inches of roosting

space per bird is needed. Before marketing time each bird will require about 12 inches of roosting space. The flock is often reduced by removing the finer specimens for next year's breeding flock, sale of early-maturing market birds, and placing the larger toms on open roosts during the fattening period.

Wooden sheds built 8 to 10 feet deep and from 20 to 40 feet long with corrals in front from 12 to 20 feet deep are in common use. Straw or hay covered sheds are built from 20 to 24 feet deep, with roosting space provided in the rear and the corral for early morning feeding in the front part.

CONSTRUCTION OF THE SHELTERS

In movable shelters built on skids considerable bracing should be put in to support the frame. Wire anchor guards fastened to well-set, sturdy posts are used as insurance against wind damage. Permanent sheds are often built, using well-set posts for the anchorage. Such buildings often lack sufficient roof bracing to prevent roofs from sagging.

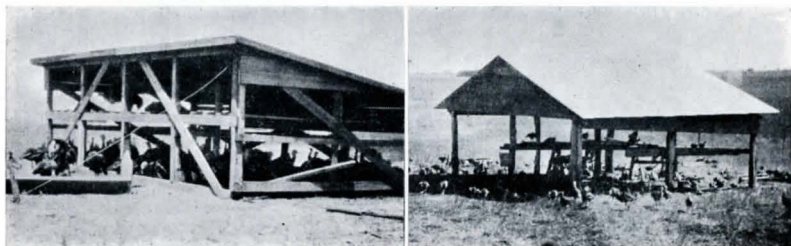


FIG. 2.—Movable sheds, such as that on the left, should be well braced and anchored.

Wire corn cribbing is recommended in place of lighter wire beneath the roosts. This wire should be heavy enough to stiffen the roost frames and support the weight of heavy turkeys. The regular 2" x 4" mesh of corn cribbing is large enough to allow droppings to pass on through. The grade or weight of wire used for the corral or front of the straw shed is not so important. A rather light-weight, large-meshed wire is often used to cover the night corral.

Operators prefer to construct roost frames so that the roosts are removable. By raising the roosts above their frame support, cleaning can be done. After the turkeys are marketed, some growers transform such turkey sheds into winter quarters for other livestock.

Wire is sometimes used as the only protection on the north, east, and west sides of the turkey shelter. Others prefer to board up these sides about four feet high, and then allow from 12 to 18 inches of wire-covered space that can be further protected by cloth or heavy paper when early turkeys are first moved to the sheds, or when late turkeys are to be kept into the winter period.

The roof is made from either flooring boards or car siding. Construction is made to run the boards the short way of the roof. Rafters are at each end of the shelter, but none in the center. The roof supports are spliced just over the tie rods on a block made of 2" x 4" blocks. Thus no center rafters are used. Such tie rods are placed 10 feet apart.

CORRAL

A stationary shelter shed has been used since 1926 by the Nebraska Experiment Station. The corral has a movable floor made by nailing 1" x 2" slats to frames made of 2" x 4" stock. Openings 1½" wide are left between the slats so that filth, wasted feed, or spilled water falls through the cracks. For use with the movable shelter and temporary corral, the slat frames should be made in a size convenient to handle. Ten frames 4' x 10' will floor a 20' x 20' corral, these being convenient dimensions for both corral and frames. About 520 board feet of lumber are required for the ten frames. Slat-covered corral floors give better results than the same floors covered with wire.

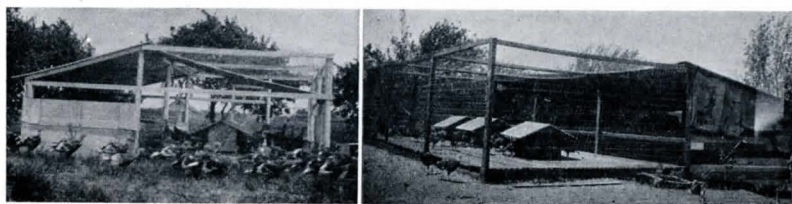


FIG. 3.—Stationary sheds and night corrals. Slat floors for the corral are a good sanitary precaution.

Figure 1 shows the corral used on the Agricultural College farm, which is made of wire corn cribbing stretched over a rigid 2" x 4" framework. This makes a very satisfactory corral, as it can be moved at the same time the shelter shed is moved. To confine the turkeys, wire can be stretched over the top very easily. The sides of the corral should be 6 to 8 feet high if no cover is used. A satisfactory temporary corral can be made by setting posts 20 feet from each front corner of the shelter, and running wire mesh fencing around them to make an enclosure. Such corrals are useful for larger flocks even though night herders are kept on duty.

The corrals are used to confine the turkeys when they are first moved to range until they have become adapted to the shelter, and while the grass is wet from rains or heavy dew. Locking the turkeys within the corral at night protects them from natural enemies, hinders stealing, and prevents stampedes during storms.

FEEDING AND WATERING EQUIPMENT

The feeding equipment needed for a flock of 100 growing turkeys consists of two bungalow feeders and two open troughs each six feet long.

If the feeders and waterers are kept inside the corral on the slat floor, there is no danger of the birds picking up contaminated feed or dirty water. The outdoor (bungalow) feeders should be supplied with feed at all times, and there is no waste from weather as these feeders are weather-proof. Open troughs supplement the bungalow feeders. They may be used for grain, wet or dry mash, milk, or water.

Many different devices are used for watering turkeys on range. Open wooden troughs about 4 feet long, and elevated on legs, are preferred by some large growers. Such troughs are filled through a hose attached to a water tank that is mounted on a wagon or trailer. Float attachments from a water wagon to a trough are also used. Barrels with hog-waterer attachments and mounted on skids are favored by growers having such equipment. Such barrels must be covered to prevent filth from getting into the barrel. An inverted tub over each barrel gives the needed protection. Smaller flocks are often watered from old five-gallon paint buckets or half barrels. Another device for providing water for birds on range is illustrated in Figure 4.

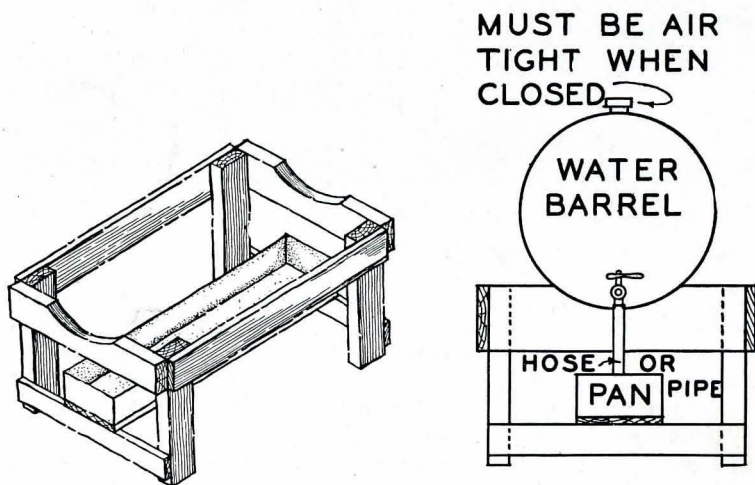


FIG. 4.—(Left) Stand and pans before barrel is put in place. (Right) End view of automatic waterer with barrel in place. Connections must be air tight.