

Free Roving Turkeys

We are raising three types of turkeys this year.
The turkeys have formed a single flock of over 30 birds.



Turkey flocks tend to forage together.
They move rapidly snatching at anything that looks edible.
They grab seeds, bugs, grasses, acorns, and frogs.
They travel quickly while constantly making their peculiar clicking-hissy sound.
They bring to mind a barbarian horde sweeping through the farm.
Broad Breasted turkeys have been selectively bred for huge breasts and meaty legs.
They can be either bronze or white.
The bronze variant has plumage much like a wild turkey.
The bronze is the turkey commonly recognized as the Thanksgiving bird.
In fact, virtually all the turkeys sold for Thanksgiving are white.
The Broad Breasted white turkeys are identical to Broad Breasted bronze except for color.
White turkeys are preferred by processors, just as white chickens are, because white birds are easier to pluck and clean.
There are turkeys of a third type in the photo.
They are of a heritage breed named Bourbon Red.
They originated in Bourbon County Kentucky.
That part of Kentucky is also well known for whiskey.
The Bourbon Red breed has been recognized for well over 100 years.
It was a popular farm turkey until the 1940s when it was surpassed in favor of the Broad Breasted varieties.
Like many other "heritage" breeds, the Bourbon Red is coming back, at least in small farm flocks.
The Bourbons are said to be especially flavorful.
I believe that is true, but flavor is affected greatly by diet and lifestyle.
It is probably true that any turkey which is allowed a near normal existence and a natural diet will be delightfully flavorful.
The bronze turkeys in the photo are larger than the whites because they are six weeks older.
The Bourbons are the same age as the bronze.
The Bourbons look almost as large as the other turkeys but they are much less meaty.
When dressed for dinner, the Bourbons will weigh less than ½ as much as a bronze even though the Bourbon appears of equal size when feathered.

Tom