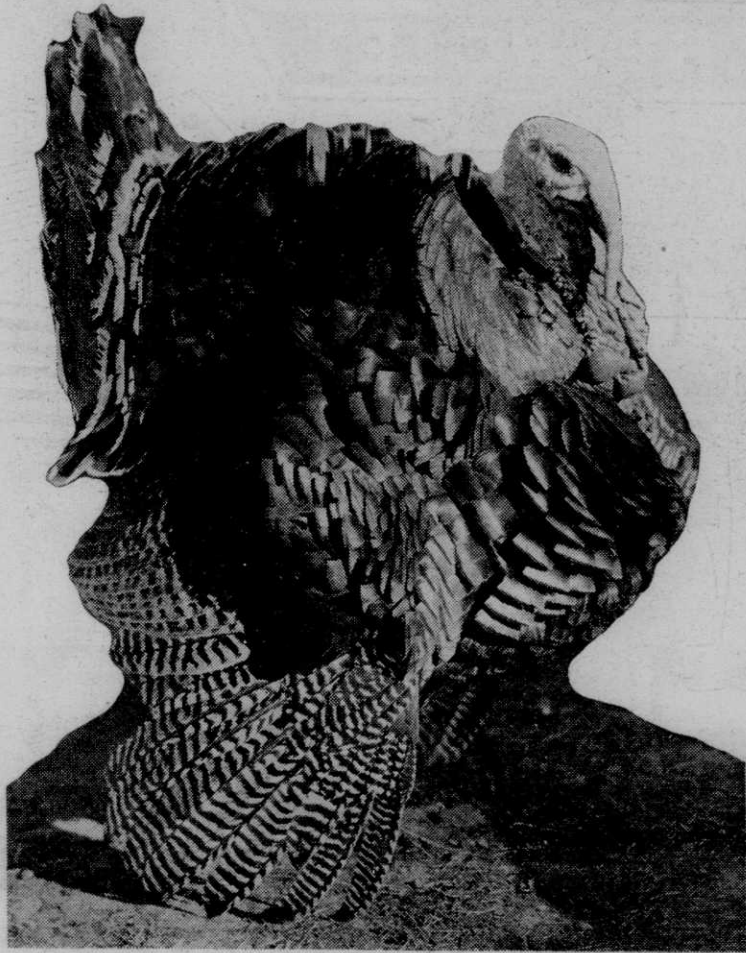


# MONTANA Farmer-Stockman



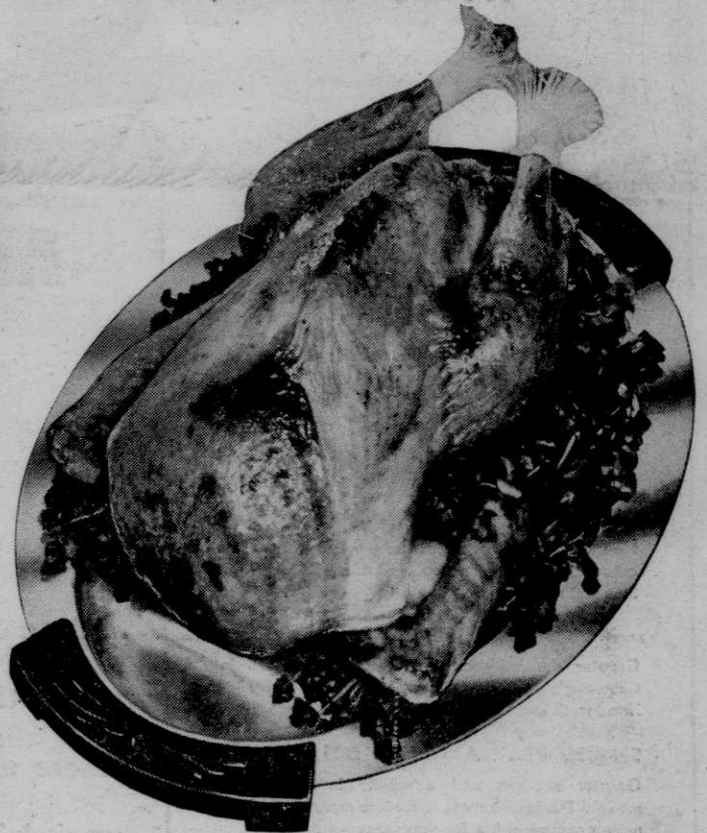
## Hold That Bird

*Until It Is Finished*

By H. E. CUSHMAN

*A Prime Bird Is  
Well Fleshed  
Well Fatted  
Well Finished  
Well Dressed*

*and, When Well Done . . .*



THANKSGIVING IS ALMOST here and with it the annual question for the turkey grower: "To kill or not to kill." One gets jittery—"The blamed birds are eating their heads off. Besides, the price may drop before Christmas."

I know just how you feel. It seems like pouring money down a rathole. Yet the sound advice is: "Don't kill until the birds are prime."

A bird is prime when you can answer each question with the word WELL. The prime bird is well fleshed, well fatted, well finished (that is, the pin feathers are grown out), well bled and well dressed. If any of these items only come up to fairly well, the bird is not prime and should be fed some more.

Yet, on the other hand, birds should not be held after they are finished. Each week you keep them after finishing costs you more and more money to put on a pound of gain. If the birds have been properly handled, they should be ready for slaughter at about 26 to 28 weeks of age.

### Indicators of Finish

There are several indicators of finish. When parting the feathers over the breast and hips, you will find the finished bird has fattened triangles that nearly meet. Furthermore, the hip bones no longer look like boiler plates minus flesh.

Usually the finished bird will have not more than two green or undeveloped tail feathers on either side of the tail. Some feel of the fat at the nape of the neck. The finished bird gets a roll of fat where the old cat picks up her kitten.

All right, so the bird isn't finished. What can you do? Feed it. Feed it what? Well,

the frame is grown. The greatest need for protein is to grow those feathers. Many make the mistake of cutting out all mash, feeding only grains, thinking fattening is the only job.

A bird has to have some protein to grow out the pins. Of course, if you have an unlimited supply of skim milk or buttermilk, that will do the trick. But lacking milk, you'd better continue mash feeding.

As to the grains you should feed, use the cheapest available. Frequently barley is the cheapest. Many growers have splendid luck in soaking barley over night in skim milk. Then the next morning enough green alfalfa leaves are added to soak up the surplus milk.

This soaking does not increase the digestibility of the grain one iota, but it does make it more palatable. The birds eat more hence finish quicker.

The alfalfa is especially important to provide the vitamin A. Vitamin A protects against disease, especially roup and colds. It's not pleasant to have birds just about ready for market, then have them come down with a regular epidemic of "swelled heads." Usually the sinus trouble is not from exposure or bad weather, but merely from vitamin A deficiency.

If you have a lot of cheap yellow corn—

I can hear you say, "I didn't know there was such an animal"—what I mean is, if you have grown some and you feel marketing through the turkeys is a wise use, then don't give too much alfalfa unless you want a yellow-skinned bird.

### Reputation to Live Up To

Your private customers may not object to a yellow skinned bird, but if shipping east, don't make more than one-third of the ration corn. Montana has a reputation of top grade white meated birds to live up to.

There are quite a few people wondering what they are going to do about dressing. The professional sticker and dry picker at two-bits a bird seems to have gone out with the Model T. So (Please turn to page 21)