

MY FAMILY'S FARM

BY KATIE OLTHOFF

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A note from the author:

My Family's Farm has been a dream of mine for over two years, since I realized that there are very few children's books showing today's livestock farms. Farms have changed over the past 50 years, but their portrayal has not. This book is an effort to change that.

This book is meant to appeal to a broad age range. The text at the top of each page, from 6-year-old Adam's perspective, is for younger children, while the in-depth information at the bottom of each page is directed at older students and adults.

Most of the photos in the book were taken by me, on our farm, but a big "thank you" goes out to Joe Murphy (Iowa Soybean Association), Iowa Turkey Federation, Bob Haines (Iowa State Fair), Minnesota Turkey and the National Turkey Federation for additional photos. The turkey artwork was done by the uber-talented Buck Jones.

I also have to thank the Iowa Turkey Federation for their support for this project. A special "thank you" to Gretta Irwin, Executive Director, and Sheila Larson, Director of Member Services, who were both vital to this project. More thanks to my husband and sons for the photo shoots, Jenn at PDG Printing for helping with the logistics, and all the friends and colleagues who have read rough drafts of this book along the way.

For more information about our farm and family, visit my blog www.onthebanksofsquawcreek.com. I would love to hear from you!

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Adam is a real child, on a real turkey farm. His family raises turkeys in central Iowa. They live in the farmhouse where Bart, Adam's dad, grew up. Bart and Katie, Adam's mom, both graduated from Iowa State University before becoming farmers.

My name is Adam. I am 6 years old and I am in Kindergarten. I love Legos, superheroes, and watermelon.



I live with my brother,
mom and dad on our
turkey farm in Iowa.



The Olthoffs are third generation turkey farmers, and proud to raise their children on the farm.

96% of farms in the United States are family farms.



My dad is a turkey farmer. Sometimes, my brother and I help him. We have fun working with him on the farm.



The turkeys hatch in Minnesota and come to the Olthoffs' farm when they are 1 day old.

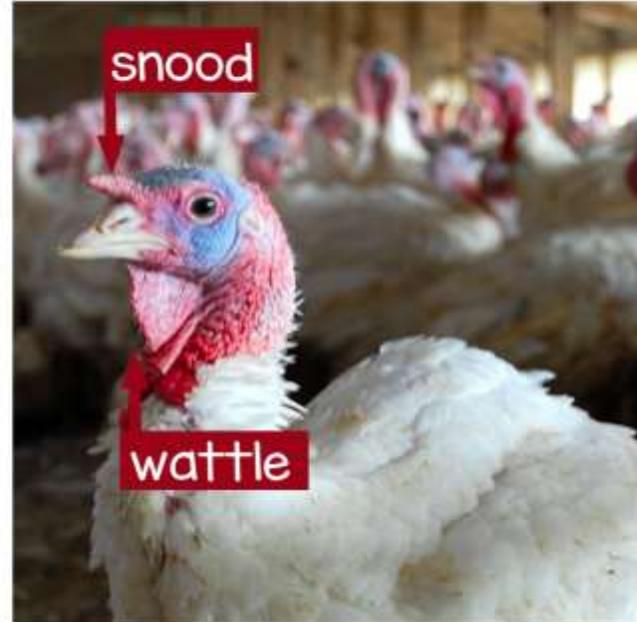
A group of turkeys is called a flock. The Olthoffs raise three flocks at a time. Each flock has 20,000 turkeys.

Turkeys are really neat animals. Our turkeys are cute and fluffy when they first come to our farm. Mom, Dad, Grandpa and I work together to unload them.



Although wild turkeys have dark feathers, today's farmers raise broad-breasted white turkeys for two reasons. First, as the name suggests, this breed has a lot of breast meat, which consumers love. Second, dark feathers leave marks in the skin of a turkey, which consumers do not love.

After a couple of weeks, the turkeys grow white feathers. They have blue heads, a red wattle under their beak and a red snood on top.



Full grown toms (male turkeys) can weigh more than 45 pounds.

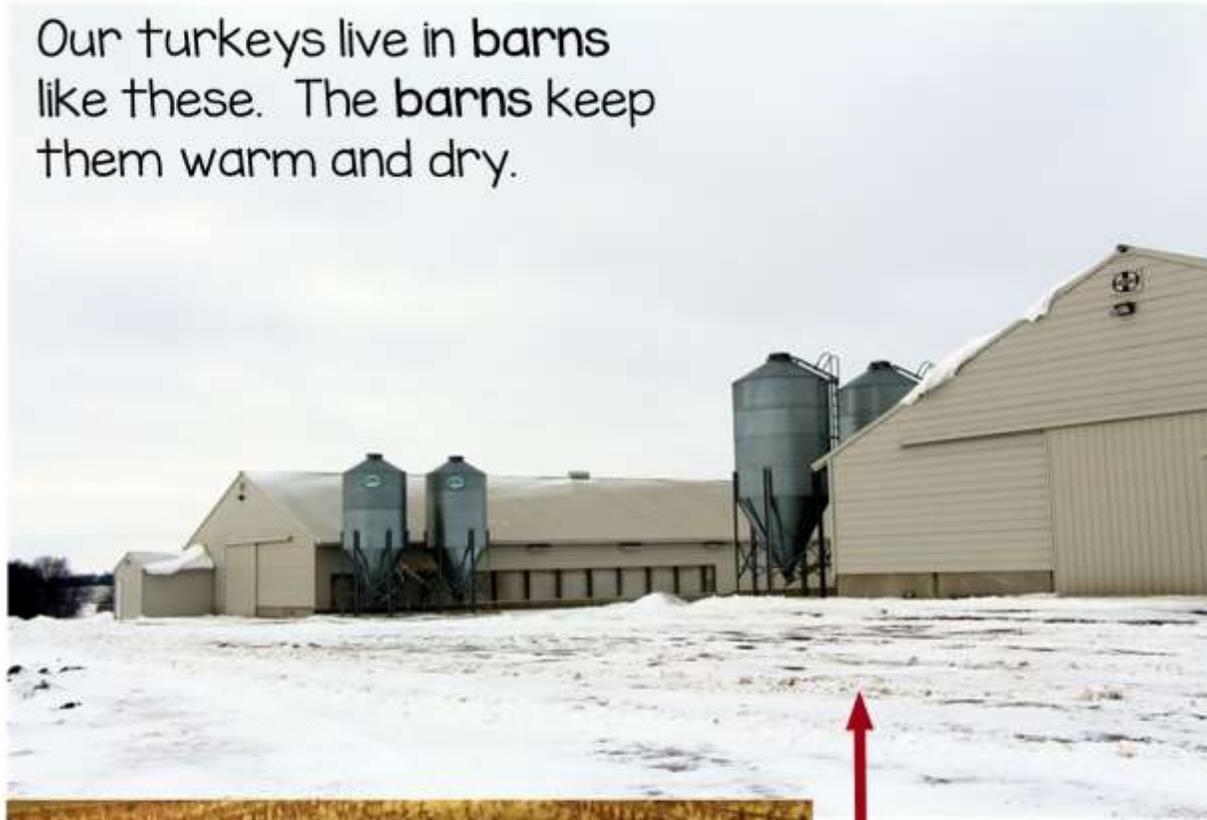
Turkeys are actually living dinosaurs! They are closely related to Apatosaurus, Tyrannosaurus, and Velociraptor.

When the turkeys get really big, I stay away from them. They weigh more than I do!



Turkey farmers want their birds to be comfortable. Today's livestock barns are designed using scientific research to provide the best environment possible for the animals. Turkey barns protect the birds from predators, disease and weather.

Our turkeys live in barns like these. The barns keep them warm and dry.



outside the barns



inside the barns

Farmers check livestock at least twice a day. They walk through the barns to make sure fans, feeders and drinkers are working properly and look and listen to make sure the animals are healthy.

Farming is not a 9 to 5 job. Bart works seven days a week and can not go far from the farm, in case something goes wrong and needs to be fixed.

My dad checks on turkeys at least twice a day. He works every day, even holidays like Fourth of July, Thanksgiving and New Year's Eve.



Turkey feed is designed to give the birds the best nutrition possible. It consists mostly of corn and soybeans, but also contains other vitamins, nutrients and protein. The feed formulation changes as the turkey gets bigger, meeting the bird's nutritional needs as it grows.

Turkeys need food and water, just like we do.



Automated feeders and drinkers give turkeys 24 hour access to clean, fresh food and water.

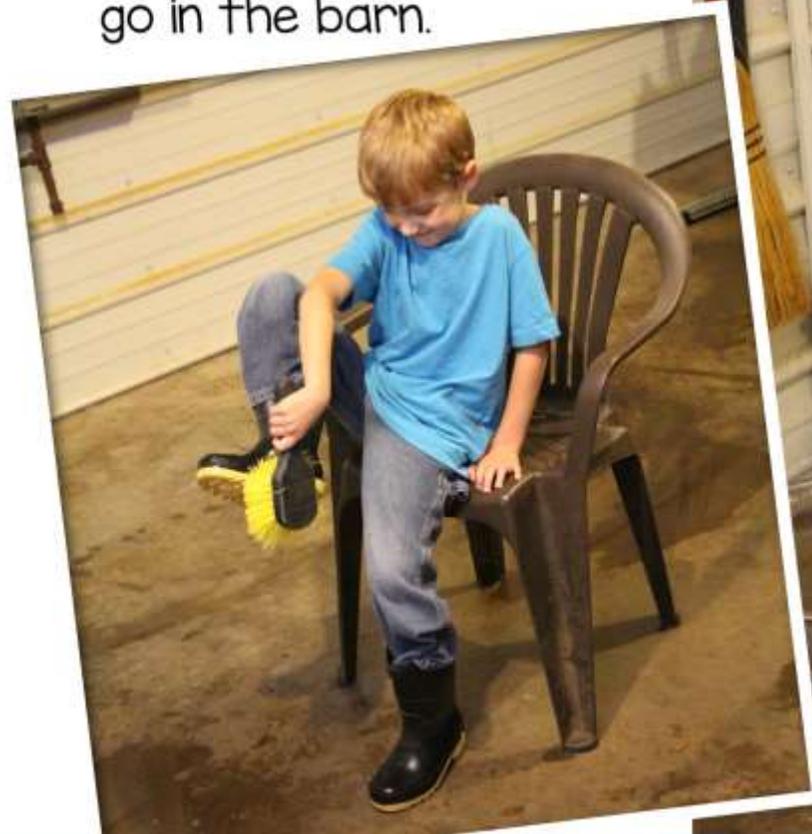
In a turkey's lifetime, they will consume about one bushel of corn and 1/3 bushel of soybeans. A bushel is about the size of a small laundry basket.

Turkeys eat corn and soybeans.



Disease prevention is a top priority. Housing turkeys in barns keeps them away from other birds that may carry disease. Farmers also use biosecurity measures, such as wearing clean clothing and boots into barns, to keep germs away from the turkeys.

We try to keep our turkeys from getting sick. People wash their hands to get rid of germs. I wash my boots to make sure they are clean when I go in the barn.



Turkey health is very important to farmers. The turkeys are vaccinated, but sometimes they also need antibiotics. Farmers work with veterinarians to decide when medicine is needed.

But if turkeys do get sick, a veterinarian gives them medicine to make them better.



It takes about 20 weeks to grow a turkey to market weight (about 45 pounds.) The turkeys grow quickly because of excellent nutrition and breeding. There are no hormones or steroids used in poultry production in the United States.

The turkeys are loaded on trucks and transported to the processing plant.



When the turkeys are big, they leave our farm and go to a processing plant.

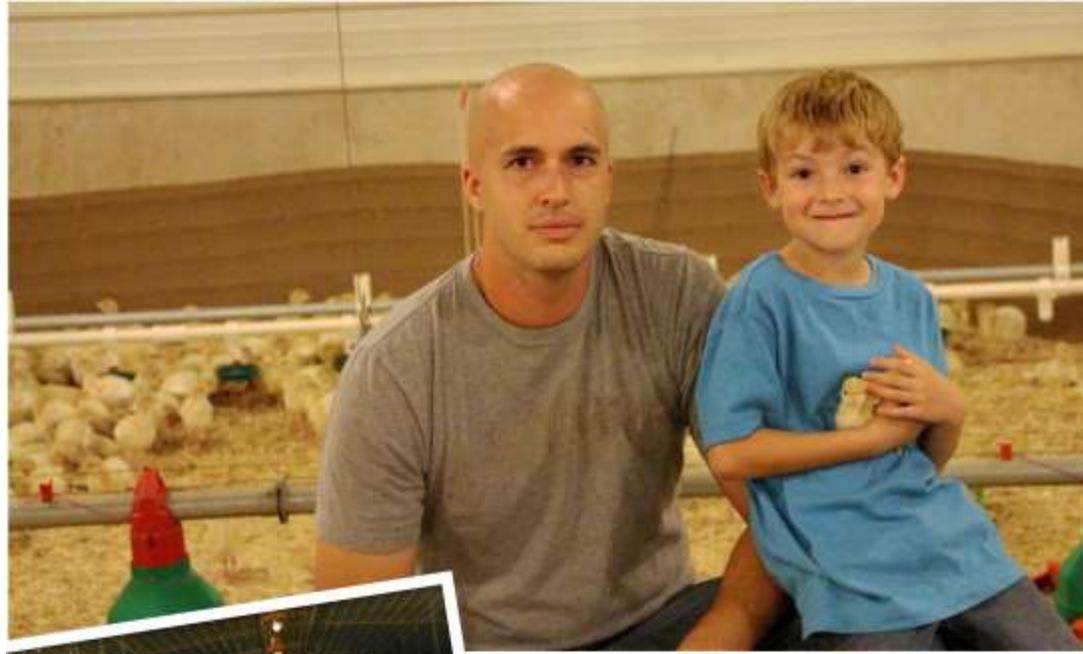


The average American eats 18 pounds of turkey each year. Half of that is on sandwiches.

We eat the meat from turkeys. I like turkey lunchmeat. Mom and Dad like turkey breast and ground turkey. Our whole family looks forward to Thanksgiving.



My brother and I want to be turkey farmers when we grow up, just like our dad.



Glossary



barn: a building that keeps animals warm and safe



farmer: someone who takes care of animals



flock: a group of turkeys



hen: female turkey



poult: baby turkey



snood: the red skin on top of a turkey's beak



tom: male turkey



wattle: the colored skin on the neck of the turkey

Turkey Trivia

Benjamin Franklin suggested that the national bird be the turkey, instead of the Bald Eagle.



Turkey manure is recycled and used as fertilizer on fields that grow corn and soybeans.

Turkeys are native to North America.

Abraham Lincoln declared Thanksgiving a national holiday.

Turkeys have about 3,500 feathers. Feather boas are often made from turkey feathers.

Turkeys hatch from eggs. It takes 28 days for an egg to hatch into a young turkey, called a poult.



Israel eats more turkey per person than any other country. The US is second.

Turkeys: Farm to Fork

1. Female turkeys, also called hens, lay eggs on a farm.



1

2. The eggs are taken to a hatchery, where they are cared for until they hatch.



2

3. When the eggs hatch, the baby turkeys, called poults, are taken to a farm.



3

4. The poults live in a brooder barn on the farm.



4

5. A farmer takes care of the turkeys.



5

6. When the turkeys are about 5 weeks old, they move to a finisher barn.



6

7. The turkeys are fully grown when they are about 5 months old. Then, they are taken by semi to a processing plant.



7

8. The processing plant makes the turkeys into meat.



8

Additional Resources:

www.onthebanksofsquawcreek.com

Katie Olthoff's blog

www.iowaturkey.org

- Recipes
- Farm Info
- Children's Activities

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