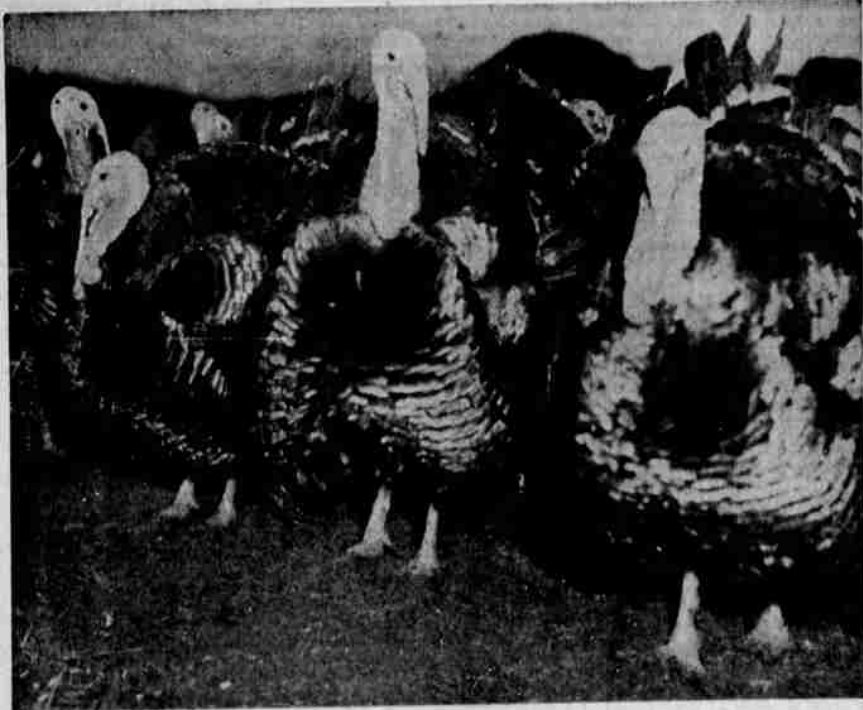
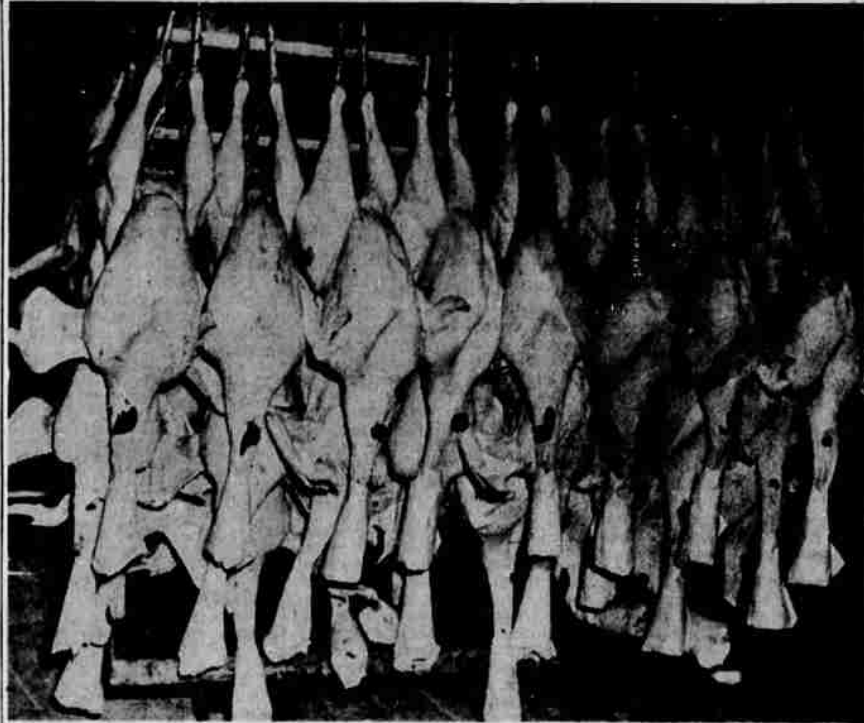


# Local Turkeys Destined For Many Of Country's Thanksgiving Tables



**BEFORE**—These prize toms at the Routledge farm are ready for market. They look as kingly in the field as they will reign over a Thanksgiving dinner. (Staff Photo)



**AFTER**—This prize crop of tom turkeys is ready for market. The birds are shipped to points all over the United States, Hawaii and Alaska.

## Douglas County Realizes One Million Dollars Yearly From Large-Breasted Bird

By GEORGE CASTILLO

Douglas county has parlayed a tradition into a million-dollar business.

The tradition is Thanksgiving and its basic accoutrement—the turkey. An approximated 750,000 festive birds all over the United States this year will crack under the weight of turkeys hatched, bred and killed in Douglas county.

It's here that the most sought after gobbler, the broad breast, roams the grasslands in numbers that even Douglas county residents are unaware of. Ed Davis, manager of Northwest Poultry and Dairy Products Co., estimates a turkey population in the county of 125,000.

**Record Crop Grown**  
With Thanksgiving just one day off, birds are being killed and shipped out from this major turkey killing plant in Oregon at a clip of 30,000 pounds per day. The killing season started this year on July 31 to siphon off a record crop

of birds. Killing and shipping has continued steadily since that date. The turkey market has increased with the rate of killing, and it appears the holiday rate of consumption will be the greatest ever recorded.

Turkey wholesale sales in 1951 will draw about \$650,000 to the grower in Douglas county. Add another \$350,000 for labor and overhead costs and it amounts to an easy million dollar yearly rate.

As a case in point, let's examine the Northwest Poultry and Dairy Products Co. in Roseburg, which, incidentally, is the only government supervised and registered plant in Oregon. Birds ready for market come off an assembly line at a rate of about 300 an hour, preceding the peak holiday market. The management pays out an average of five dollars per turkey "on the hoof."

Davis said it was a common occurrence to write a check for \$30,000 on an order of turkeys from the producer. This creates a need for employees to kill, clean and pack the birds. Northwest employs from 10, in the slack season, to 40, before the holidays, to do this processing. Then, there's machinery, lights, power and a multitude of other costs before the freight and railway companies begin the job of shipping the birds all over the country.

**Processing Steps Noted**  
The processing of a turkey should be particularly interesting to housewives who spend many a weary hour picking and cleaning a turkey for the holiday feast. From the time the turkey is killed until it is hanging on the rack ready for packing, it takes slightly over 10 minutes. Within that 10 minutes, a continuous assembly line carries the turkey through a scald-

ing vat, several picking machines and through a line of 20 women who clean the pinfeathers.

But this assembly line rate is still apparently too slow to meet the rate of delivery and the rate of orders. Although killing started earlier this year than ever before, the plant is booked up until Dec. 21 with live turkey deliveries.

The reflected great demand for the Douglas county product stems from a widespread desire for the heavily-meat, broad-breasted variety of bird which Oregon has led the nation in developing. Oregon, and this county particularly, has yearly improved the turkey in size and breadth of breast to a point no other state of the union has approached. This is primarily due to ideal climatic conditions for turkey breeding.

Some hens have run as heavy

as 20 pounds and some toms have reached a record weight of 40 pounds. It is not unusual to see a bird with a breast measuring six inches across. This means an abundance of white meat.

Aside from the weather, probably the most important factor in that development is the annual Northwestern turkey show at Roseburg. Although threatened by outside interests, the show will be staged here again this year Dec. 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7. It's here that breeders compete for quality with emphasis on the broad-breasted turkey.

One of the foremost individual developers of this broad-breasted variety is George Routledge, whose hatchery is located about nine miles west of Roseburg. At peak season approximately 20,000 turkeys roam his farm. Year after year, he has improved the blood lines of the birds by trap nesting, which is a means of identifying eggs and subsequently the turkeys.

His estimates of the value of the turkey industry in Douglas county far surpasses the million dollar estimate made by Davis. Calling it "really big business," he points out its relationship with other businesses in a cycle from the egg to the platter which includes equipment, feed, labor, processing, overhead, packing and shipping. He reports that the turkey industry in the United States is estimated at one quarter of a billion dollars.

He points out that Douglas county and southern Oregon are particularly fitted for turkey raising because of the rolling hills, stump and other necessarily unusable land. "Land which supports one cow or a couple of sheep will range several hundred turkeys," Routledge says. "Thus the income is better per acre than in any other industry." He continues, that as an added benefit, the birds can range on farm land since they not only fertilize the land, but also kill the weeds.

In conclusion, Routledge said

the industry has been a boon to Douglas county because it employs many people and benefits almost every business.



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**GREYHOUND**



**ENROUTE**—After killing, the turkeys are scalded and picked by a machine, but a score of women at the Northwest Poultry and Dairy Products Co. must pick the feathers which the machine has missed. (Staff Photo)

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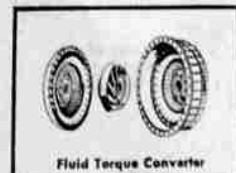
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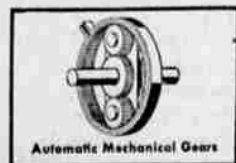
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