

FUN FACTS: TIME TO TALK TURKEY

Few foods receive the fanfare of turkey come the holiday season. The National Turkey Federation says Americans eat 46 million turkeys each Thanksgiving and another 22 million on Christmas. An additional 19 million enjoy turkey as part of their Easter celebrations.

Though turkey is enjoyed throughout the year, it is most popular during the holiday season. Some celebrants may want to know more about this beloved bird before sinking their teeth into their next holiday meal.

The following turkey tidbits may surprise you.

- Turkeys are large game birds that are closely related to chickens, pheasants and quail.
- The turkey's scientific name is "meleagris gallopavo," which is the wild turkey from which the domesticated turkey many people eat descends.

There is another species of turkey known as the ocellated turkey, which is native to the Yucatán Peninsula in Mexico.

- By the early 1900s, the wild turkey neared extinction. Restoration projects have increased the number of turkeys from about 30,000 birds back then to nearly 7 million now.

- Despite their size, turkeys can fly in the wild. They often perch in trees to sleep to protect themselves from predators. Some domesticated turkeys may not fly because they have been bred to be overly large to produce more breast meat.

- The heaviest turkey ever raised was 86 pounds.

- A male turkey is called a "tom" or a "gobbler," while female turkeys are referred to as "hens." Only the male will

make the familiar gobbling sound, which is used to attract mates.

- A hen is smaller than a gobbler and does not have the distinctive beard of modified feathers that gobblers have on their breasts. Males also have sharp spurs on their legs for fighting.

- Male and female turkeys also can be differentiated by their droppings. Male droppings are spiral-shaped, while

females' look like the letter J.

- Both genders of turkey have snoods (the dangling appendage on the face) as well as red wattles under their chins.

- A hen can lay about 10 to 12 eggs over a period of two weeks. The eggs will incubate for 28 days before hatching. Baby turkeys are called "poults."

- Turkeys and peacocks may look similar, but they are not closely related.

- Turkeys have excellent vision due to their eyes being located on the sides of their head. This gives the birds periscopic vision.

- The gizzard is a part of the turkey's stomach that contains tiny stones that the bird has swallowed. The stones facilitate the digestion process.

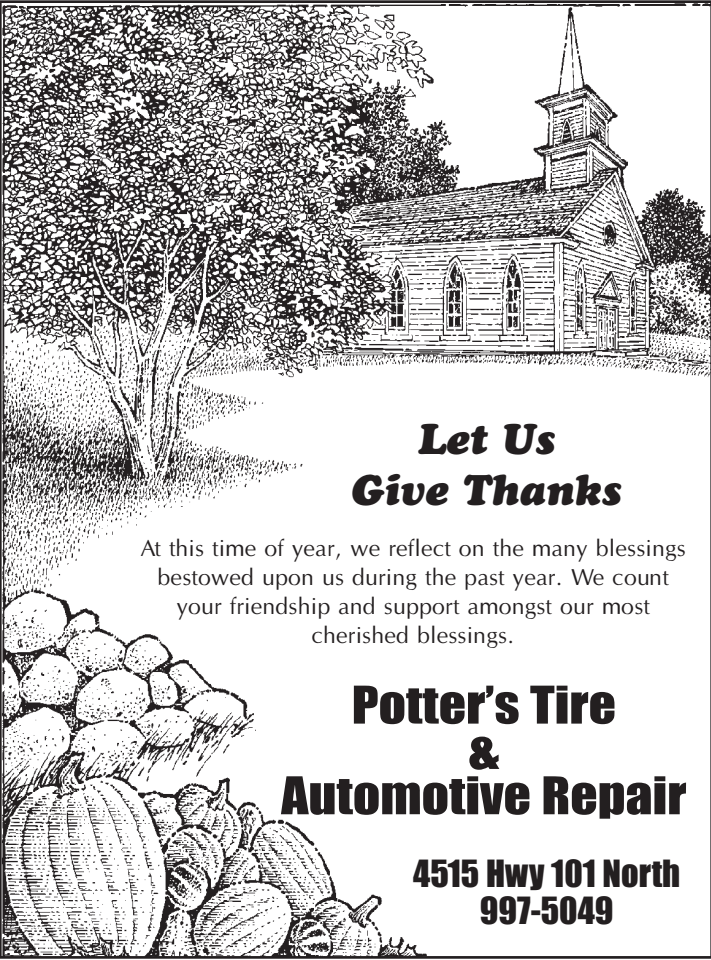
- Benjamin Franklin did not support the bald eagle as the nation's symbol, feeling the turkey would be a better choice. In a letter to his daughter, he wrote, "He [bald eagle] is a rank coward; the little king-bird, not bigger than a sparrow, attacks him boldly and drives him out of the district. For in truth, the turkey is in comparison a much more respectable bird, and withal a true original native of America."

Eagles have been found in all countries, but the turkey was peculiar to ours ..."

- Turkeys will have 3,500 feathers at maturity. Rumor has it the costume worn by the "Sesame Street" character "Big Bird" is made of turkey feathers.

- The turkey shares its name with a country. But why? A turkey bears some resemblance to the guinea fowl. Though it is native to eastern Africa, the guinea fowl was imported to Europe through the Ottoman Empire and came to be called the "turkey-cock" or "turkey-hen." When settlers in the New World began to send similar-looking fowl back to Europe, they were mistakenly called "turkeys."

- Despite an abundance of turkeys being eaten between November and January each year, June is National Turkey Month.



Let Us Give Thanks

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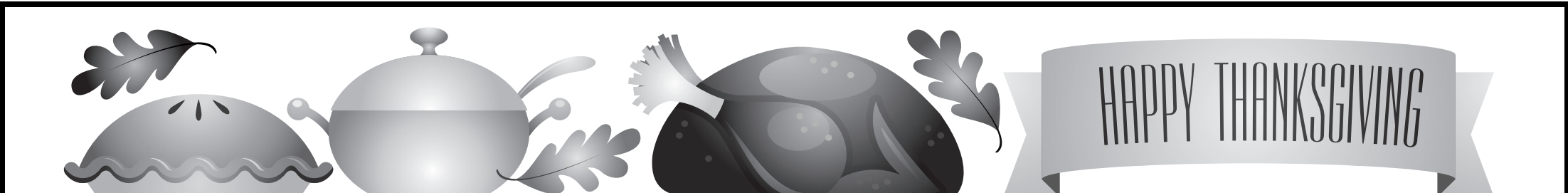
At this special time of year, we'd like to extend our warm wishes to you and yours for a joyous Thanksgiving celebration.

We really appreciate your loyal support.

Happy Thanksgiving
Chad E. Clement, DDS and staff

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Dr. Chad Clement



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