

# Thanksgiving Birds Scarce; Turkeys To Be \$1 A Pound

By W.W. EDGAR

Did you ever believe that the day would come when your Thanksgiving turkey would cost one dollar a pound — and that you'd be lucky to get it at that figure? Well, turkey lovers, that day has arrived, and the price may soar higher before the day arrives when we bow and give thanks for our blessings.

A survey during the past week reveals that the turkey farmers in the area have only half the number of birds they had a year ago, and some wish the flocks were even smaller.

"When I learned what the

price of feed was this spring," said Loyd Sharland, manager of the Gottschalk farm in Plymouth, "I decided to take only half the number I had a year ago."

"Would you believe it? I am now paying \$200 a ton for the same feed that cost only \$130 a year ago. And don't forget, I raise some of the food myself."

"I'll have to get at least \$1 per pound for the same bird that brought 60 cents a pound last Thanksgiving time. And if I took the 10 per cent margin that the auto companies take, the price would jump even higher — maybe up to \$1.25 per pound."

The turkey market has un-

dergone so great a change that Sharland has even taken down the roadside sign on Territorial Road.

"I have about 800 birds," he said "and that's about what I need for regular customers. If the price goes much higher, I may even sell them undressed to a Detroit market."

The story was the same at Roper's Turkey Farm in Livonia. The owner just raised her arms, and almost shouted, "Cost too much to raise."

In sober reflection, she and her daughter pointed to the fact that they must buy all of their feed and the price has jumped from \$130 per ton to \$200.

Then they added, "And we must pay our help \$5 an hour. Can't make money that way."

The younger of the owners did a bit of mental arithmetic and solemnly explained:

"To make the same amount of money on a bird that we made a year ago, we'll have to charge about \$1.60 a pound. It all depends on what the big stores do — we'll watch them and then do the best we can."

During the survey, it was learned that for a time last spring, Roper's was even considering dropping the turkey business.

On second thought, the family decided to try it once

more and had to be content with eight week-old chicks.

"We only bought half as many," the younger member of the family explained. "Last year we had about 4,500 but this year, we have only about 2,000 and even that number is too much to feed."

Explaining the current trend of the turkey market, Sharland was quick to stress that nature should be given some of the blame.

"Don't forget we had a very wet spring, and many farmers were late with their planting. That brought about a shortage and the higher cost of feed. So the government must not be given all the blame."

Then, turning to look at his "half a flock," he said, "If you think this is bad, it may be worse next year."

The Ohio firm with whom I do business wants a blank contract for next year's order. He claims he can't put the price in at this time, so we'll just have to gamble."

So if you want a turkey for Thanksgiving, you had better get your order in now. That big, luscious drumstick may not taste so good at more than \$1 a pound.

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