

## Proper Bird Handling

Raising turkeys involves handling birds for many different reasons, from the time birds are hatched and placed on the farm through the life of the flock. Everyone that is handling these animals must be trained in the proper techniques.

### Placing Poult

Poult can be picked up individually or in groups of four or five. They must be held gently and never dropped more than eight inches.



When poults arrive at the farm from the hatchery they need to be placed in the rings in a timely manner and with proper care.

1. When unloading boxes, ensure stacks do not become unstable.
2. Distribute boxes throughout the barn, placing the appropriate number outside each ring.
3. Remove box dividers from each box as you prepare to place poults into the ring.
4. At floor level, tip one box at a time so that poults are placed onto the litter.

- a. Never tip boxes above floor level.
- b. Never place more than one box in the same spot.
- c. Do not place poults directly onto drinkers or feeders.
- d. Stack empty boxes outside of ring.



### Bird Handling

There are four methods for handling birds. Your supervisor will provide instruction on the proper technique for the size of the bird and the task being performed.

Catch hooks can be used to assist in catching individual turkeys over eight weeks old. This is especially useful in catching individual birds within the flock for blood testing or weighing. The goal is for the shank (portion of the leg below the hock joint) to be caught within the hook on the end of the device. Do not drag the bird to you with the catch hook, instead move down the catch hook and towards the bird to pick it up.

# Bird Handling Methods

## Key Points

- Always hold birds firmly but do not use excessive pressure.
- Always support the bird at two points of contact.
- Hold the bird near your body to help provide support and security for the bird.
- Position the bird for your safety as well as bird comfort.
- Turn your head so that you can see, but are in a position so that your face cannot become injured.
- Birds must be released close enough to the ground and in a manner so as not to cause injury.



## Body - Birds Less Than 10 lbs (4.5 kgs)

1. Cup both hands around the body of the bird with your thumbs near the backbone and your fingers over the wings and around the breast.
2. Gently shift the bird so that the breast is in the palm of one hand.
3. Provide additional support by gently grasping both legs with the other hand.



## Both Legs - Birds of All Sizes

1. Grasp the shanks of both legs close to the hock joint.
2. Gently lift and rotate the bird so that its feet are facing up.



## Opposite Side Wing and Leg - Birds Over 10 lbs (4.5kgs)

1. Step to the side of the bird with your face slightly turned to avoid injury.
2. Reach across the bird to grasp the wing at the shoulder on the opposite side.
3. Quickly grasp the leg at the hock joint opposite the wing you are holding.
4. Lift the bird keeping it close to your body.



## Both Wings\* - Birds of All Sizes

1. Grasp the bird from behind by both wings close to the shoulder.
2. Gently lift the bird.

*\*This method is approved but not recommended, particularly for larger birds. Accurate hand placement is critical to avoid injuring a wing.*

**It is critical that everyone that will be handling turkeys knows that these actions are never acceptable:**

- Never drag a turkey.
- Never hold a bird by a single leg or wing
- Never carry a bird by the neck, head or tail.
- Never carry a bird by an injured wing or leg.
- Never kick, violently shove, throw, punch or swing birds.
- Never drop birds from elevations that would cause injury.