Wisconsin Poultry

Poultry is what we call domesticated birds which are raised on farms to provide us with eggs, meat, and other by-products. Wisconsin farmers raise chickens, ducks, and turkeys.

Chickens have been raised on Wisconsin farms for many years. In the past, chickens often roamed freely on the farm eating scraps and insects. They laid about 3 eggs per week, only during spring, summer and fall, hiding them in the grass and under bushes. This caused many problems. The chickens didn't receive a balanced diet and often died from disease and predators. The farmer also had problems finding the eggs, sometimes eggs were old before they were discovered.

Today, most chickens are raised indoors. The farmer provides them with fresh water, a well-balanced diet, and protection from predators. Now chickens lay 5 eggs per week and the eggs are collected almost as soon as they are laid. Wisconsin chicken farms produce over 1 billion eggs each year.

Chickens also provide us with meat. Chicken is low in calories and fat. In the last 50 years, new discoveries in animal feeding and care have made more chicken available. Today chicken makes up 33% of the meat we eat.

Show your "eggspertise" by doing this puzzle:

1. _______ once laid only 3 eggs per week.
2. In the past, chickens ate insects and ________s.
3. Domesticated birds such as chickens are called ________.
4. Each ________ Wisconsin farms produce over 1 billion eggs.
5. In the past, chickens ________ freely.
6. Poultry are ________ birds.
7. In the past, chickens often died from ________.
8. Today, chickens lay 5 ________s each week.
9. Chickens once hid their eggs in the ________.
10. Today, eggs are collected almost as ________ as they are laid.
Wisconsin farms raise more ducks than any other state. Each year 6 million ducks are raised here, that's 45% of all the ducks raised in the United States.

Ducks are raised to provide us with meat, **down**, and feathers. The meat from ducks is different than that from chickens and turkeys. Chickens and turkeys have both white and dark meat, while the duck is all dark meat.

Down is the small, soft feathers found on water birds. It is an excellent insulator which protects water birds from the cold and wet. Down is used in comforters and winter clothing. It weighs very little but keeps the person wearing it toasty warm. We get down from ducks. Feathers are another **byproduct** from ducks. They are ground up and used in animal feeds and fertilizers. Some feathers are still used as stuffing for pillows.

---

Choose one of the following poems with a classmate. Prepare the poem for performance. Read some lines individually and some as a group. Use props if wanted.

One day last winter
I was chilly.
My teeth were chattering
And I felt silly.
My dad thought my jacket
Was just too thin,
So we went to the store
And they let us in.
I saw one I loved
That was black and red.
"The stripes on the sleeve
are cool," I said.
But my dad shook his head
And said with a frown,
"That jacket's not warm.
You need one with down."
I was confused by what
My dad said.
"Down? What's that?"
I shook my head.
Ducks are covered
With small soft feathers.
This "down" keeps them warm
No matter the weather.
Down insulates a duck
And it'll insulate you.
Down jackets even come
In black and red too!
So we found one that fit.
I'm in luck!
And I'll always be grateful
To the duck!

It rained today
For an hour or two,
On the fields and the houses
And the waters blue.
And everything under
The sky was soaked,
From the bright sunflower
To the frogs that croaked.
Except the web-footed
Birds with luck,
Of course I'm thinking
Of the waterproof duck.
They need no raincoat
Or shelter really.
No umbrella either
To make them look silly.
Using their bill
They smear oil over feathers.
Then moisture rolls off
No matter the weather.
The oil is found
In a gland near the tail.
Ducks preen (smear the oil)
For hours without fail.
So whether ducks are
On water or under,
Whether they feel
Light showers or thunder,
The water can cover.
Them completely yet
Being waterproof,
The lucky duck won't get wet!

My mom's a
Fantastic cook,
When chicken or
Turkey she serves.
But too many people
Like dark meat,
And it really gets on my nerves.
When the platter gets down to me,
With only the white meat there,
I take some to
Please my mom,
But inside
I'm feeling bare.
I love the dark meat best.
Hey! I know what to do!
I'll become a farmer
And raise some birds
That have no
Meat that's white.
Then dinners like this
Will be all smiles,
With nothing but dark meat in sight.
From what I just heard
My mom say,
We all might be in luck.
Tomorrow night
At this dinner table,
Mom'll be serving
Duck!
Turkeys are native to America. The Pilgrims hunted wild turkeys. In fact, turkey was served at the first Thanksgiving dinner.

Ben Franklin felt the turkey was a very noble bird. He wanted it to be our national emblem instead of the bald eagle.

Today, domesticated turkeys are raised on Wisconsin poultry farms.

About 6 million turkeys are raised here each year. Male turkeys are called toms and females are hens.

Today turkey is served all year round, not just on holidays. It is low in fat and cholesterol which is good for your heart. Turkey, as well as other meat, is important to our diet because it is high in protein.

From your reading –
Write down facts about each of these birds:

Turkey

Duck

Chicken

Ostrich

Emu

Pheasant

Write the name of each of these birds on separate pieces of paper. Then, ask your teacher to attach a piece of paper to your back and the backs of each of your classmates, without letting each student know which bird is written on his/her back. Then, ask other students “yes” or “no” questions to find out which bird you are. Use the facts above to formulate your questions.