

Title:

Consumers Gobble Up Organic Turkeys

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282

Summary:

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Keywords:

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Article Body:

In response to growing concerns for public safety regarding antibiotics in poultry, Americans are consuming organic turkeys in record numbers.

Organic birds are raised without antibiotics. They are fed 100 percent certified organic feed and packaged without artificial flavors or colors.

"Organic poultry sales, which would include turkey, are forecasted as the fastest-growing category of organic product sales, with an anticipated average annual growth of 33.2 percent through 2008," said Katherine DiMatteo of the Organic Trade Association.

Antibiotics are commonly used in conventional agriculture to accelerate livestock growth and prevent some diseases. Yet public health authorities directly link antibiotic use in conventionally raised livestock to more people contracting infections that resist treatment with the same antibiotic drugs.

As a result, the American Medical Association in June 2001 adopted a resolution opposing the use of antimicrobials at non-therapeutic levels in agriculture, or as pesticides or growth promoters, and urged that such uses be ended or phased out based on scientific risk assessments.

Several large poultry companies announced they will phase out one particular poultry antibiotic that the U.S. Food and Drug Administration suspects could be responsible for generating antibiotic-resistant bacteria.

But despite the promise, farmers are not required to report antibiotic use, and consumers have no way of knowing if their poultry purchases are supporting it.

Consumers can be sure of avoiding the use of antibiotics in food production by buying organically produced meat. Antibiotics, growth hormones and artificial flavors and colors are forbidden in certified organic foods, which must comply with strict national standards.

For health-conscious consumers, low-fat and high-protein organic turkey is a popular choice year-round. Nationwide, more than 15 percent of all turkeys consumed are during the Thanksgiving holiday and another 8 percent over Christmas.