


Toe Trimming of Turkeys or Chickens in Small and Backyard Poultry Flocks

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Toe trimming, also called toe clipping, is the amputation of the ends of a bird's toes to eliminate the toenails (see Figure 1). Turkey producers in the United States routinely practice toe trimming to reduce carcass scratching. Some egg producers also have used toe trimming, but the broiler industry has not engaged in this practice.

In the past, turkey producers performed toe trimming by using a hot blade or surgical scissors. Today, many producers have adopted microwave technology to trim toes.

Although toe trimming causes pain early in a bird's life, birds whose toes are trimmed may have lower stress and fearfulness later due to reduced incidence of physical injury from sharp claws of pen mates when the birds become excited.



Fig. 1. Six-week-old turkey whose toes have been trimmed. Source: Sally Noll, University of Minnesota.