



Presidential Turkeys return to roost at Virginia Tech

Thanksgiving is nothing if not a trove of traditions: family gatherings, massive meals, and appreciative reflections.

Now, there is another item to add to the list of holiday customs: the Presidential Turkeys coming home to roost at Virginia Tech.

For the fourth consecutive year, the birds will flock from the White House to spend the rest of their years at Gobblers Rest.

The two birds — one selected as the National Thanksgiving Turkey and its alternate — will join Peas and Carrots, the stars of last year's event, at Gobblers Rest. The previous lucky birds — Wishbone and Drumstick, and Tater and Tot — have died due to natural causes, which is to be expected.

The public can meet the newest Hokies on Dec. 1 from noon to 4 p.m. at the Livestock Judging Pavilion, 445 Plantation Road, Blacksburg, Virginia. You can follow the progression of the birds' journey from the White House to Blacksburg on the College of Agriculture and Life Science's Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram pages and post your own photos of the birds using the hashtag #PresidentialTurkey. You can also follow along on the Virginia Tech Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram channels.

Their arrival in Blacksburg follows a long migration for the turkeys.

The 2019 National Thanksgiving Turkeys are being raised under the supervision of 2019 the National Turkey Federation Chairman Kerry Doughty, former president and CEO of Butterball LLC, and Butterball contract grower Wellie Jackson of North Carolina.

"We are extremely grateful for Virginia Tech's continued hospitality in welcoming the National Thanksgiving Turkey and its alternate to Blacksburg," Doughty said. "With a mascot like the HokieBird and the excellent care of the Department of Animal and Poultry Sciences, we know these lucky birds will feel right at home at Gobblers Rest."

After two birds are chosen based on appearance and temperament, they head to Washington, D.C., where they stay at a hotel near the White House as part of a series of media events leading up to the presentation of the National Thanksgiving Turkey. One is chosen to take part in the Rose Garden ceremony and the other is its "wingman."

The event not only serves as the opening of the holiday season, but also reminds America of the history and role of agriculture, from feeding the world to growing the economy.

The Presentation of the National Thanksgiving Turkey started in 1947. The National Turkey Federation's first chairman, Virginian Charlie Wampler Sr., was among the first to present a live turkey to President Harry S. Truman.

Years before, in 1922, Wampler was a Virginia Cooperative Extension agent who sought advice from the head of Virginia Tech's Department of Poultry Science, A.L. Dean, on how to raise turkeys. In the following years, Wampler went on to create a growing business while Dean advised Wampler on turkey-raising techniques. Wampler is regarded as the father of the modern turkey industry and founded the National Turkey Federation in 1940.

Today, poultry makes up the largest sector of Virginia's agricultural portfolio with more \$1.1 billion in annual cash receipts. The industry contributes more than \$13 billion in economic activity in the commonwealth, according to the Virginia Poultry Federation.

The Virginia Tech Department of Animal and Poultry Sciences and the Virginia-Maryland College of Veterinary Medicine help grow the state's economy by conducting innovative research to benefit industry and educating the next generation of poultry scientists and veterinarians.

Rec Sports hosts holiday greeting card writing for deployed Corps alumni

Join Recreational Sports in expressing gratitude and recognition to our Corps alumni who are deployed this holiday season.

Students, faculty and staff are invited to stop by McComas Hall on Dec. 3 from noon until 4 p.m. Greeting cards will be provided. At the end of this event they will be mailed to Virginia Tech Corps of Cadets currently serving our country.

For more information, email Kelly McPherson, kmcphers@vt.edu.

Leave use guidelines for Thanksgiving and winter closure

Virginia Tech will be close for the following holiday breaks:

- Thanksgiving break: University closes at noon on Wednesday, Nov. 27 through Friday, Nov. 29. The university reopens on Monday, Dec. 2.
- Winter break: University closes on Tuesday, Dec. 24 through Wednesday, Jan. 1, 2020 and will reopen on Jan. 2.

During these times, the following days are designated holidays for eligible faculty and staff:

- Thanksgiving break: Wednesday, Nov. 27, starting at noon, through Friday, Nov. 29
- Winter break: Dec. 24 and Dec. 25, 2019 and Jan. 1, 2020

Employees will need appropriate leave types to cover the applicable work hours on the remaining days of winter break – Dec. 26, Dec. 27, Dec. 30, and Dec. 31. For example, the typical full-time employee who works eight hours Monday through Friday will need 32 hours of leave for these days. The most common types of leave used for this period are Annual, Family Personal, Compensatory (Holiday Comp, Overtime Comp). Sick leave usage would not be applicable unless an employee has a substantiated illness or has doctor appointments.

If employees have questions, please contact the HR Service Center at hrservicecenter@vt.edu or at 540-231-9331.

Giving back with 2019 Commonwealth of Virginia Campaign

In this season of giving, we are reminded of the importance of giving back, even if it is in small ways. A great way to do this is to donate to a charity that is near to your heart through the Commonwealth of Virginia Campaign (CVC). As we approach the Thanksgiving holiday and with only a few weeks remaining in the campaign, employees are encouraged to continue donating.

Thanks to generous contributions that our employees have already made, the campaign has raised more than \$239,000 of the university's \$390,000 goal since the kickoff on Sept. 30. While this is a great accomplishment, there is not much time left to donate, to reach our goal.

This year's campaign will run until Dec. 13. No donation is too small, and all will help reach our university goal.

Employees can donate through online payroll deduction, choosing either a one-time deduction or a 24-pay period deduction. To contribute to the campaign, donations can be made through the campaign website. Cash and checks are also accepted.

More information can be found: www.cvc.hr.vt.edu.

Save the date for 2020 Hokie Wellness Health & Benefits Fair

As part of the university's commitment to maintaining healthy lifestyles, all employees are encouraged to start the year off right by attending the 2020 Hokie Wellness Health & Benefits Fair on Jan. 15 from 7:30 a.m. to 2 p.m. at McComas Hall.

The fair is free and employees are encouraged to bring their Hokie Passport to check-in. Virginia Tech Division of Human Resources, Student Affairs and Real Life Dental sponsor the event.

The fair's schedule will include health, wellness, and benefits exhibitors, exercise classes, a department dance contest, interactive activities, a bloodmobile, and much more. Flu, shingles, TDAP (tetanus, diphtheria, pertussis), and pneumonia vaccinations will be available on a first come-first basis.

For more information, contact Hokie Wellness at hokiewellness@vt.edu or by calling 540-231-8878.

VT Golf Shop hosts annual holiday sale on Dec. 4

All university employees and students can participate in the annual holiday sale at the Virginia Tech Golf Shop on Dec. 4. From 8:30 a.m. to 6 p.m. on that day, all items are marked down at least 20% and many items more than that. Men's and ladies' long and short sleeve shirts are discounted as much as 75 percent. For more information, call 540-231-6435.

Editor Note: Holiday Blackout

The Blue Sheet newsletter will not be published Dec. 25 or Jan. 1 due to winter closing. The newsletter schedule will resume Jan. 8.