



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

**November 5, 2014**

## **PARDON ME; OHIO TURKEY FARM TO PRESENT PRESIDENTIAL TURKEY THIS THANKSGIVING**

*Cooper Farms, of Ft. Recovery, Ohio, to raise the turkey to be pardoned by President Obama*

**COLUMBUS** – A 76-year-old family-owned Ohio farm is raising the National Thanksgiving Turkey that's expected to be presented to President Barack Obama in just a few weeks. The presentation of the National Thanksgiving Turkey to the President is bestowed each year upon the individual serving as chairman of the National Turkey Federation (NTF). This year, the presidential flock is being raised by Cooper Farms in Fort Recovery, Ohio.

“The Cooper family is proud to have the opportunity to be part of this time-honored tradition,” said Gary Cooper, chief operating officer of Cooper Farms and chairman of the NTF. “As a family-owned farm, we take great pride in the turkeys we raise.”

Gary Cooper's youngest son, Cole, has been raising a flock of approximately 20 birds in a custom-built red barn at his home in Mercer County, Ohio, since July, when the turkeys were hatched. The barn was designed as a smaller version of one of the original farms owned by Virgil Cooper, founder of Cooper Farms and Gary Cooper's father.

The “family” essence is a quintessential part of Cooper Farms and very important to the Cooper family. Raising the turkeys has truly been a family affair, involving not only the Coopers, but also much of the company's team.

“It was a great honor for my dad to ask me to raise the presidential turkey flock,” said Cole Cooper. “This is my heritage. It is what my grandpa started and is what I grew up with, as I watched my dad, aunt and uncle expand Cooper Farms into what it is today.”

Cooper Farms will hand-select two tom turkeys for the special national honor. One will serve as the National Thanksgiving Turkey and the second as an alternate.

Four different breeds of turkeys are represented in the presidential flock to celebrate NTF's 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary and Cooper Farms being in business for just more than 75 years. The variety of birds has also offered a unique opportunity for Cooper Farms to educate elementary students from across Ohio. Since October, Cooper Farms has hosted and visited more than 3,000 students from the local community. These visits have helped get the turkeys accustomed to large audiences and have let students meet the soon-to-be famous presidential flock.

Americans are invited to submit name suggestions for the two turkeys during a national naming contest that begins November 5, 2014. Ideas may be submitted by visiting: [OhioPoultry.org/NameTheTurkey](http://OhioPoultry.org/NameTheTurkey). The final decision on names for the National Thanksgiving Turkey and an alternate will be made by President Obama, his family and the White House staff.

Individuals are also encouraged to follow #PresidentialTurkey14 on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and Pinterest to see photos and videos of the turkeys as they grow and prepare for their trip to Washington, DC.

In Ohio, turkey farming is an important part of the state's agricultural economy. The Buckeye state ranks ninth nationally in turkey farming, producing more than 219 million pounds of turkey each year, valued at more than \$158 million. Turkey farming is responsible for the creation of 2,183 jobs and \$71 million in earnings.

“Ohio is a major turkey farming state, and we are pleased to be raising this year's presidential turkey flock,” said Jim Chakeres, executive vice president of the Ohio Poultry Association. “Ohio's turkey farmers are firmly committed to providing safe, affordable food for consumers and to caring for their flocks and the environment. It's our responsibility, and it's the right thing to do – and Cooper Farms is a great example.”

The presentation of the National Thanksgiving Turkey to the President of the United States is an annual White House tradition that occurs the week of Thanksgiving. The presentation of the National Thanksgiving Turkey began when President Harry Truman received a turkey as a gift from NTF. In 1989, President George H.W. Bush remarked that he was “pardoning” the turkey, beginning a custom followed by Presidents at the end of each presentation ceremony.

Learn more about Cooper Farms, where the presidential flock is being raised, at [CooperFarms.com](http://CooperFarms.com). To find out more about turkey farming in Ohio, including how farmers care for their animals and the environment and provide safe, healthy food, visit [OhioPoultry.org](http://OhioPoultry.org).

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**CONTACT:** Diane Hurd, (937) 205-9621, [diane@inspireprgroup.com](mailto:diane@inspireprgroup.com)  
Hana Bieliauskas, (513) 919-1880, [hana@inspireprgroup.com](mailto:hana@inspireprgroup.com)  
Cassie Jo Arend, (419) 670-4006, [cassiejo@cooperfarms.com](mailto:cassiejo@cooperfarms.com)

### **About Cooper Farms**

Growing healthy live turkeys, chickens, egg layers and hogs and producing great food products has been a tradition for the Cooper family of northwest Ohio for three generations. Founded in 1938 by Virgil and Virginia Cooper, Cooper Farms is still family owned and operated. Today, with the help of our team members, Cooper Farms is a leading food supplier, selling a variety of delicious fully cooked and ready-to-cook turkey, ham and chicken products to customers throughout North America. Visit [www.cooperfarms.com](http://www.cooperfarms.com) or [www.facebook.com/cooperfarms](http://www.facebook.com/cooperfarms) for more information.

### **About the Ohio Poultry Association**

The Ohio Poultry Association, a nonprofit statewide trade organization, represents more than 600 Ohio egg, chicken and turkey farmers. These individuals are integral members of their local communities and are committed to providing high-quality, safe and affordable product to consumers. Ohio's egg and poultry farmers are equally committed to being good neighbors, reliable operators and responsible stewards of the environment. For more information, visit [www.ohiopoultry.org](http://www.ohiopoultry.org).