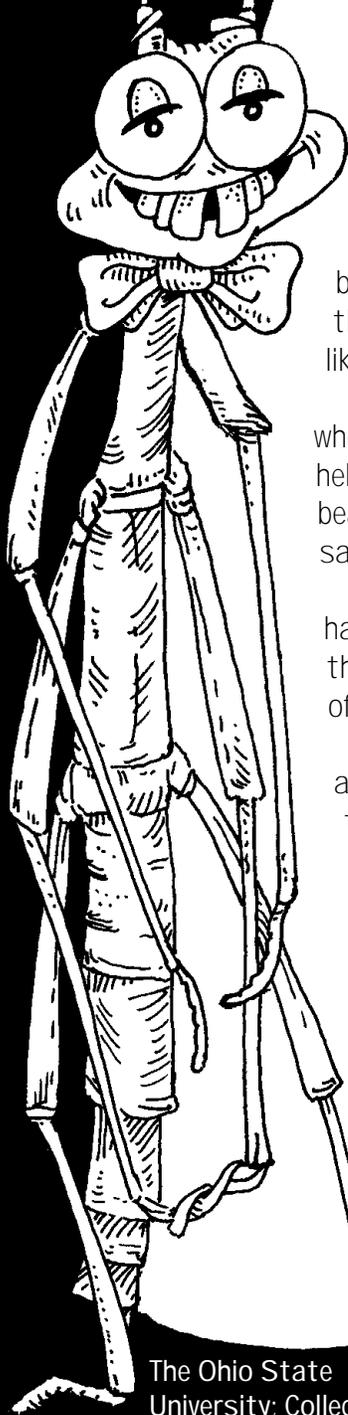


# Smart Stuff

with Twig Walkingstick



Dear Twig: I've heard that turkeys have beards. Is that true? Don't they shave? Ha ha ha.

Ah, that's a good one. In fact, it's true that many turkeys have beards. And it's also true that they don't shave, mainly because they don't have fingers to push the top of the shaving cream can.

The beard of a turkey is actually a cluster of bristly, hairlike feathers. But it's not on the face or the chin. It hangs on the front of the chest. It looks like a tail that's on the wrong end.

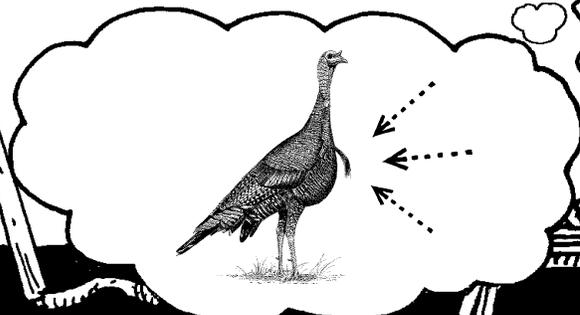
The beard appears on male turkeys, or toms, when the birds are about 11 weeks old. It's designed to help them attract females, or hens. Conversely, the beard on male humans is designed to attract pizza sauce.

In the wild, almost all toms and a very few hens have a beard. A few toms have such a very long beard that it actually drags on the ground! That's the sign of a big, old gobbler, one who rules the roost.

It's different on the farm. Some toms don't have a beard, some hens do, and in either case it's shorter than those on wild turkeys.

What do you know when you see a big bearded bird? It's probably a male turkey. And it might be in ZZ Top. Mercy!

*Twig*



For the week of  
Nov. 18, 2001

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### Hey Editor!

Karl Nestor, professor, Department of Animal Sciences, Ohio State University, provided the information for and reviewed this column.

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