

Across the

## Editor's Desk

**Editor's Note:** The December 11 issue of Lancaster Farming carried a page one article on a "devastating" new strain of foreign Newcastle disease which has hit poultry industries in many other countries and is now beginning to appear in the U.S. The lead article in the December 15 issue of the Poultry Times carries the following report by Craig E. Cook under a Fontana, Calif., dateline:

A highly virulent form of Newcastle disease is suspected of having reared its ugly head in a disease outbreak here which has resulted in 80 per cent flock mortality.

According to Ellsworth Kerr, microbiologist at Poultry Antigen Laboratories, Ontario, Calif., the suspected velogenic Newcastle outbreak occurred in a started pullet operation here, which totals 20,000 birds.

Illness in the flock initially began in a 5,000 bird house of ten week old pullets. Kerr said the birds had been mass vaccinated at four weeks of age, and were due for revaccination shortly after the outbreak.

A flock mortality of 80 per cent was experienced in the 5,000 birds hit with the suspected virus. Because of its highly virulent nature, Kerr said the airborne strain of disease has now begun to affect birds in two houses adjacent to the first location.

A pheasant, suspected of having carried the virus, was seen milling around feed supplies at the pullet operation. It is possible the pheasant came from a nearby operation which breeds wild game birds. The suspected

bird has now been captured, and is being tested for Newcastle disease in its velogenic form.

Last month a small one hundred bird back yard flock of chickens was stricken with Newcastle disease only a mile from the present outbreak. In that case, mortality was 92 per cent, with remaining birds ordered killed by federal authorities.

Kerr said that virus samples obtained from the pullet flock have been diagnosed by Poultry Antigen Labs as the highly virulent velogenic Newcastle. He added that samples of the virus are now in the hands of biologists at the virus repository of the University of Wisconsin at Madison, where they will be classified.

In the meantime, he says, the samples have also been confirmed as velogenic Newcastle by Dr. R.A. Bankowski at the University of California at Davis.

As a preventative measure against rapid spread of the Newcastle strain, a hold order preventing movement of birds out of the infected pullet operation, has been imposed by state and federal authorities. Kerr also said that authorities are giving consideration to imposing restrictions on movement of all birds from the Fontana area.

Federal officials are also considering a "slaughter and indemnity" program for the stricken pullet flock. Such a program would see the federal

government ordering complete killing and burning of all birds in the operation, with owners reimbursed for the chickens.

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**Editor's Note:** For many years, until recently, the U.S. horse population was declining so rapidly it looked as though there soon wouldn't be many left. But

the decline was mostly in work horses. For the growing non-farm population, horses—like bicycles—are suddenly developing a new appeal. The December issue of Electricity on the Farm included the following article entitled "There's Gold in Them Thar Horse-Lovers' Pocketbooks" suggesting that caring for pleasure horses offers many business opportunities:

Today's recreation-oriented society is making horses an important farm enterprise once again. Authoritative estimates put present horse population at the highest it has been for several decades—about 10 million and

growing 15 per cent annually, according to USDA. (Horse population reached a peak of 27 million in 1918.)

Horses, today, are bred and raised mainly for pleasure purposes. People own horses for various reasons—as a hobby, for pets, recreation, show, sport, etc. Actually, spectator horse sports—racing and showing—outdrawn the combined gate attendance of professional and college football plus baseball.

All this growing enthusiasm for horses offers many farmers new opportunities for profitable business ventures.

Many hobbyists start with their

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