

Newcastle - A Threat to All

Consumers, poultry producers and pet bird enthusiasts alike will suffer substantial economic losses if exotic Newcastle disease is not completely eradicated from the United States, according to the American Veterinary Medical Association.

Last spring this viral infection, deadly to chickens, turkeys, pet birds and wild birds, seriously threatened consumer supplies of poultry products. Secretary of Agriculture Earl L. Butz declared the problem a national emergency on March 14, thus allowing the federal government to release funds for a nationwide eradication program.

Although these measures have stopped its advance, exotic Newcastle disease is far from eradicated. AVMA and other concerned organizations such as the American Association of Avian Pathologists fear that the government may now relax recently-imposed import restrictions or cut back eradication efforts. Unless the disease is completely purged from the U.S., they point out, a reservoir of the virus could develop in wild and exotic pet bird populations. This would necessitate continuous vaccination of domestic birds that would hamper poultry production and increase the price of poultry, poultry products and pet birds. Total losses to the public could be staggering.

Concerned over U.S. Department of Agriculture actions apparently aimed at winding down the Newcastle disease program, the American

Veterinary Medical Association recently urged the secretary of agriculture to continue intensive efforts until the disease is completely eradicated.

In a letter to Secretary Butz dated November 1, the association commended USDA "for the vigorous steps that have been taken to contain and ultimately eliminate exotic Newcastle disease from the United States."

Long-Range Benefits

Speaking on behalf of the nation's 29,000 veterinarians, the association called for total eradication of exotic Newcastle disease virus from the U.S. In the long run, a less vigorous program not only would cost far more but also would adversely affect many more people, according to the association.

"The American public should not be asked to live with the disease," AVMA declared, urging Secretary Butz to consider the long-range benefits of continued efforts aimed at complete eradication.

"Money spent on the eradication program will be well justified in comparison to the financial impact the disease will have if it is allowed to spread across the country," the association pointed out.

Ecologic Disaster

Veterinarians of the American Association of Avian Pathologists add that the effects of the newly-imported Newcastle disease virus on America's wild bird population are not even known yet and could lead to disastrous ecologic disturbances.

In a statement developed by its Committee on Diseases of Wild and Pet Birds, AAAP has warned that "the limited natural wildlife and domestic animal resources of the U.S. cannot continue to afford the losses which have resulted from direct or indirect effects of uncontrolled introduction of exotic birds and animals. The potential dangers to native wildlife species, domestic animals and man make it imperative that more responsible actions be developed to prevent further serious assaults upon our environment."

AVMA supported the AAAP position, stating in its letter to Secretary Butz that, "since exotic Newcastle disease exists in many parts of the world, the vigorous enforcement of importation regulations for all avian species is vital to the success of keeping the disease out of the United States."

Research Needed

The association also called for a more permanent solution to the threat, pointing out that "as this very serious problem presents a continuing danger to the United States, increased funding for exotic Newcastle disease research is urgently needed."

"A cooperative program with Mexico to ultimately eliminate the disease from that country would give added protection to the

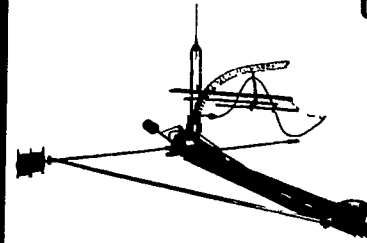
United States," the association offer to assist USDA in its added, and concluded with an eradication efforts.

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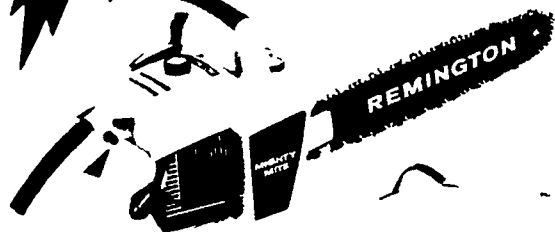
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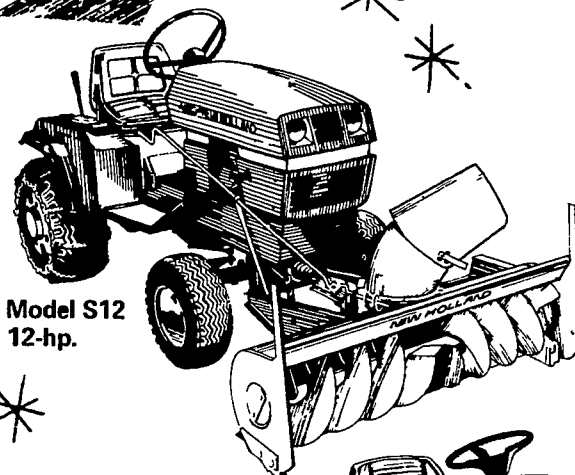
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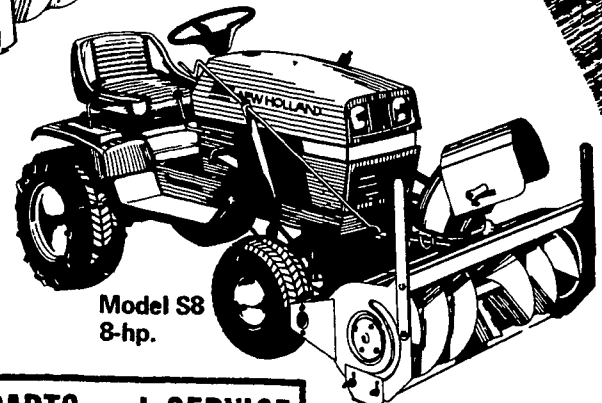
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