

Thousands of exotic birds don't make import grade

NEW YORK, N.Y. — Of the 700,849 cage birds that entered the United States during 1980 through commercial or federal quarantine stations, only 6,810 were refused entry because of exotic Newcastle disease, a U.S. Department of Agriculture veterinarian said.

Dr. Sam Richeson, veterinarian in charge of avian imports for USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, also said 27,753 birds were dead on arrival at the quarantine stations and 74,911 died during the mandatory 30-day

quarantine period from a multitude of causes.

During this time, Richeson said, 2,285 personally owned pet birds were brought into the country through nine special USDA import stations. Of these pet birds, 18 died during quarantine or were refused entry because of exotic Newcastle disease.

Another 2,673 exotic birds were abandoned at the border or seized by U.S. Customs Service agents. Of these, 1,345 were held in quarantine for at least 45 days and sold at

auction or donated to zoos. The rest died during quarantine or were destroyed because they were infected with exotic Newcastle disease.

Exotic Newcastle disease is not a health hazard to people who eat poultry and eggs, Richeson said. However, it can cause a transitory eye inflammation or flu-like symptoms in people who handle diseased birds.

Although exotic Newcastle disease affects all birds, it is most damaging to poultry. It can kill all

the birds in an infected flock, Richeson said.

The disease will kill many types of pet birds, but others can become infected without showing any signs

of the disease. These birds, Richeson said, can carry the virus and shed the infection—thereby posing a constant threat to poultry and other birds.



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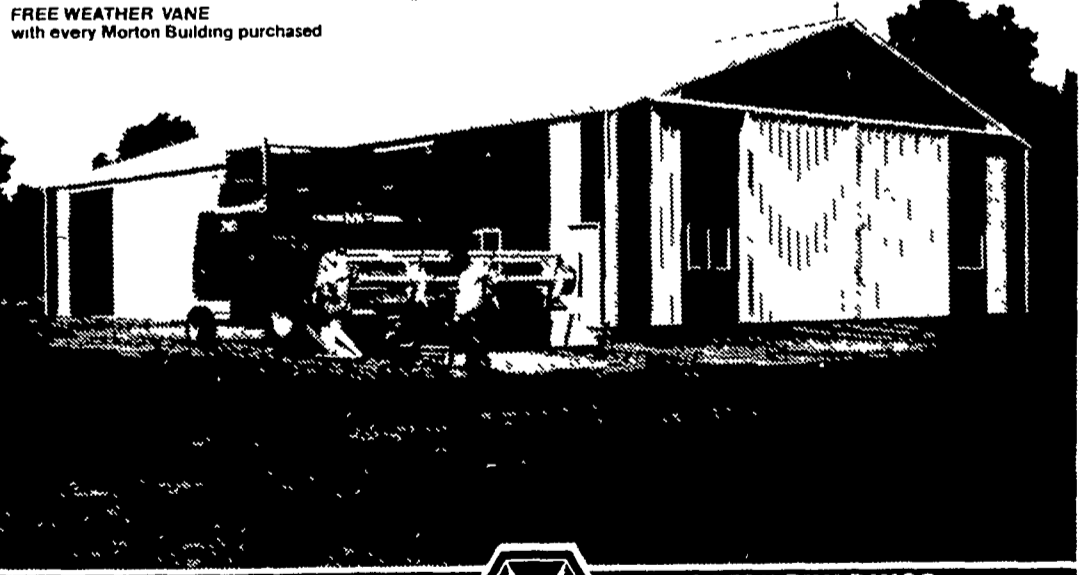
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