

## USDA requires legbands on Ca. parrots

WASHINGTON D.C. — Since March 16, U.S. Department of Agriculture officials have required psittacines—parrots and related birds—shipped from California to be identified with leg bands as a means of controlling outbreaks of exotic Newcastle disease.

John K. Atwell, deputy administrator of USDA's Animal and Plant Health Service, said USDA inspectors issue the official legbands and supervise their application on qualified birds.

Commercial shipments of birds released from privately owned, USDA-approved quarantine facilities should already be identified by leg bands applied when the birds entered quarantine. In addition to the leg band identification, the birds must be accompanied by a waybill, invoice or similar document signed by a USDA inspector.

Atwell said the new rules were put into effect because illegally imported parrots have been implicated in nearly all recent outbreaks of exotic Newcastle disease. This foreign disease is a highly contagious virus infection that is almost always fatal to chickens. Parrots can carry and transmit the disease for months without showing any sign of the disease.

Atwell said parakeets, budgerigars, lovebirds and cockatiels are exempt from the new banding requirements because they are bred domestically and have not been implicated in any recent exotic Newcastle disease outbreak. Personally owned pet birds accompanied by the owner are also exempt.

"One of our major problems in recent outbreaks—which in many cases appeared to stem from smuggled birds that brought in the disease—has been tracing bird movements and bird ownerships," Atwell said. "Identifying birds with leg bands will make it difficult to move smuggled birds in legitimate trade channels."

Atwell said the regulations specify California shipments because that state appears to be the principal channel for smuggled bird shipments to the United States. It is also one of

the largest markets for parrot-type birds.

Some 95 percent of all the psittacine birds moved legally from California already meet the new banding rule because they are required to be banded when they enter USDA-approved, privately owned quarantine stations, he said. Atwell said USDA will provide the legbands and apply

them at no charge.

Since 1972, it has cost approximately \$72 million to eradicate outbreaks of exotic Newcastle disease, he said. If these eradication efforts were not successful, it's estimated that losses to the poultry industry—and ultimately, consumers—could exceed \$400 million annually.

The new rules become effective on an interim

basis upon publication in the Federal Register, which is scheduled for March 16.

The public has until May 17 to submit comments on the banding rule. Comments should be sent to the deputy administrator for veterinary services, APHIS, USDA, rm. 870 Federal Building, 6505 Belcrest Rd., Hyattsville, Md., 20782.

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## Ephrata YF to meet Thursday

EPHRATA — The Ephrata Young Farmers Chapter will hold a special meeting at 7:45 p.m. Thursday in the Ephrata High School Agriculture Department.

Among the topics of discussion will be no-till planting of corn and soybeans, weed control and pesticide certification update.

Speakers will include Tom Johnson, of the Lancaster County Soil Conservation District; Dave Cody, of Chevron Chemical Company; and Kent Fritz, of Organic Plant Food.

The Conservation District's no-till planter will be brought to the session.

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*5-15-30	\$186.50	\$170.50
*6-18-36	\$208.00	\$192.00
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