

Avian experience

(Continued from Page A1)

Hallowell said. "We want to be sure this funding best meets farmers short-term needs and helps keep them in operation."

The agriculture secretary said "Any indemnity program would be a first step in a coordinated effort to keep the state's \$400 million poultry industry a viable part of the state's economy. We are seeking input from farmers and agribusinesses to insure that the state's effort is best tailored to support a rapid full recovery and considers the overall problems within the poultry industry."

Hallowell said that George Werner, executive director of the Economic Development Committee of the Cabinet, and officials

of the Departments of Commerce, Community Affairs, Labor and Industry and Budget, met Friday afternoon with representatives of agribusinesses affected by the outbreak of the virus.

"Economic impact information from the industry should provide accurate figures to consider in setting up state level recovery initiatives," Hallowell said.

State Senator Noah Wenger, State Representative Ken Brandt and other legislators from the quarantine area have spearheaded efforts to seek additional state assistance for the industry. Hallowell noted that their continuing cooperation has been important in making realistic plans for a response to Avian in-

fluenza's effect on farmers and businesses alike.

Thornburgh requested that Hallowell meet with industry leaders, farmers, and legislators in recent weeks to assess the effects of the outbreak and consider a variety of alternative state actions to provide further assistance.

"We will continue these cooperative efforts and do whatever is within our abilities to help the Pa. Poultry Industry survive the crisis," Hallowell said.

birds that survived the flu, 177,000, were slaughtered Nov. 20 and 21 by USDA-sponsored task force members.

With the houses now empty and the "happy chickens silent," Warren and Alicia Miller can look back over their situation and begin

the task of rebuilding their farm.

Looking back to April when a mild strain of avian flu was diagnosed in some flocks, Mrs. Miller said they were concerned about the disease and had taken precautions to protect their operation. Tours to the farm were stopped, and trucks transporting eggs to brokers were taken to car washes to prevent the flu from spreading from farm to farm.

Despite the precautions, the highly pathogenic strain of avian flu struck the Miller farm. The problems began in a small area on the southside of the complex, Miller said. The disease then spread across the four laying houses.

To add to the frustrations the Millers were experiencing, the egg market was high and they had no eggs to sell. "It was a very frustrating and helpless feeling," Mrs. Miller said.

The frustrations are continuing for the Millers, who have been married 23 years. Poultry houses have to be paid for, and the job of disinfecting the poultry houses to the specifications of the task force lies ahead. But, as Miller said, there is no turning back.

Before the Millers can receive indemnity payments for the lost birds, the task force must approve the disinfecting of the houses. The houses must also lie idle for 30 days.

Will the Millers continue in the poultry business? The answer is yes.

Miller said he has pullets, being grown elsewhere, that will be 20-weeks old in January. He hopes to have his clean-up approved by Dec. 10 so he can move the birds into the houses by mid-January.

The Millers said the task force has been a tremendous help in getting them and other poultrymen through the avian flu ordeal. Competition barriers have been broken, Mrs. Miller said, and everyone has united to fight the disease.

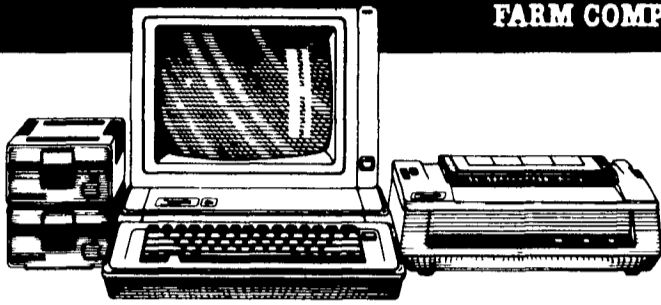
"The allied industries are really working for us," she said. "They're not just concerned for themselves but for us also."

In a Dec. 1 update of the avian flu situation, 88 flocks were diagnosed with the hot strain of the virus. Sixty-five of those flocks, representing 3,667,000 birds, have been depopulated thus far.

According to poultry industry spokesman Tim Allwein, the avian flu is being contained with the federal-state imposed quarantine zone. Only one flock since Nov. 21 was diagnosed outside the quarantine. This was a flock of 31,000 layers in Willow Grove, Salem County, N.J. The flock was depopulated and an avian flu satellite office was established in New Jersey.

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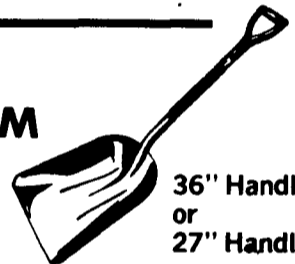
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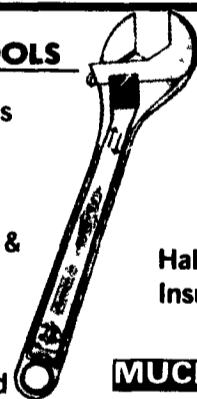
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