

Satellite office is service-oriented

Poultry surveillance

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Baggott said that letters were sent to area poultrymen to explain the program and ask for their assistance. While the program is voluntary, Baggott stressed that its success depends on farmer cooperation.

Farmers are asked to collect any birds which died of apparently normal causes and place them in plastic bags. The bags are to be placed at the end of driveways or farm lanes to be picked up by task force personnel.

By picking up the dead birds this way, little or no contact will be made with the poultry flocks, Baggott said. This will help assure that healthy flocks are not exposed to the virus.

The birds will be taken to a lab at William Penn Way off Route 30 in Lancaster County. There, task force personnel will process the birds and send samples to the main USDA lab in Ames, Iowa, for testing. No lab analysis will be performed at the Lancaster lab, Baggott said.

While providing early detection of the avian flu virus, the surveillance program will establish healthy flocks and help determine when to lift areas from the quarantine. The program will also help those who issue permits, Baggott added.

The new program does not replace "sick call" reports and producers who notice unusual symptoms in their flocks should call 717-569-3259.

Poultry producers in the quarantine zone who have not received information about the poultry watch program are asked to call task force headquarters at 717-295-1800. Those that have received information but do not have a telephone where they can be reached should also contact task force officials.

In other matters, USDA officials are still considering the eradication of all birds with the H5 strain of the avian virus, but no decision has been made yet.

Earlier this month, poultry industry representatives met with USDA officials in Washington to further discuss the Technical Advisory Committee's recommendation to depopulate all flocks diagnosed with the H5 type flu. The recommendation received the support of the industry representatives, said Tim Allwein, Pa. Poultry Federation spokesman.

Although industry leaders agreed to support the recommendation, the Pa. Poultry Federation (PPF) said that it can support this decision provided that flock owners are given a fair market value for birds killed, Allwein said. PPF stressed that fair market values are needed if the state poultry industry is to survive.

In an update on the avian flu situation, 251 flocks were diagnosed with the highly pathogenic virus as of Thursday. This includes 9.9 million birds. A total of 248 flocks, representing 9.89 million birds, have been depopulated. The three remaining flocks were scheduled to be depopulated Friday.

A breakdown of the number of avian flu flocks per county is: Lancaster, 233 flocks; Lebanon, seven flocks; York, five flocks; Chester, four flocks; Berks, one flock; and New Jersey, one flock.

This includes 113 layer flocks, 56 broiler flocks, 19 pullet flocks, 16 layer-breeder flocks, 14 broiler-breeder flocks; four turkey flocks and nine "other" flocks.

GETTYSBURG — When an outbreak of highly pathogenic avian flu hit a turkey flock near the York-Adams County border about a month ago, task force personnel saw a need for a satellite office in Gettysburg.

The office was established after a turkey flock near East Berlin was diagnosed with the "hot" avian flu virus. Almost immediately after the virus was confirmed, the growing quarantine area was shifted west to include Adams County.

"We've had an outbreak of the virus near the county line," said Dr. Richard White, a coordinator of the satellite office, "now we want to know if there are more (infected flocks) in the area."

According to White, a swine epidemiologist from Penn State, the office will issue permits for the shipment of birds within the 5,100 square mile quarantine zone. The office will also conduct diagnostic testing of area poultry flocks.

The former offices of the Cumberland Valley Savings and Loan Association, 9 Chambersburg St., were converted for use by the task force. About 20 staff members will be based in Gettysburg initially, White said. The staff will primarily investigate Adams, Franklin and York County poultry operations.

"We are trying to determine if the virus is here. The only way we can do that is to test eggs from suppliers, birds that are slaughtered or birds that die," White said.

"If we get a positive reaction, we will go to the farm and run a diagnostic and epidemiological investigation. If we want to maintain this area in the quarantine zone, we have to prove it is here."

White said that he could not estimate when or if the quarantine zone will be lifted from Adams County. Nor could he say how long the satellite office will remain in operation. It all depends on the



Dr. Richard White

results of the surveillance system, he said.

Anyway we can get a hold of birds for surveillance purposes, we are going to use them. Once we compile the information, we will pass it up the command chain, because that is how we can get the quarantine lifted," White said.

Poultry is the third leading agricultural business in Adams

County. White said he was surprised by the poultry traffic in that area.

"We are getting extremely good cooperation from local farmers," White said. "We are getting a great deal of work done, but it will be some time before the operation runs smoothly."

White added that area poultry farmers are afraid that the virus will spread and ravage their flocks. Farmers are keeping to themselves as much as possible.

White said a meeting of county extension agents and a separate meeting with the executive board of the county poultry associations are planned.

"We are not trying to get all of the poultrymen together," he said. "We intend to leave the executive boards disseminate the information. The less traffic we have the better off we will be."

The Gettysburg satellite office is open from 7 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday through Saturday. Farmers can use one of two numbers to obtain information on diagnostic testing and permit processing: 717-334-7514 and 800-223-8939, a toll-free exchange.

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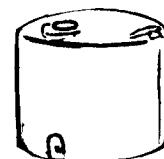
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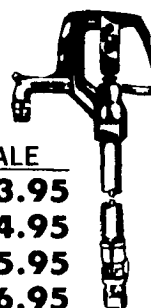
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