

Specter visits county in wake of avian flu

BY JACK HUBLEY

MASTERTSONVILLE — U.S. Senator Arlen Specter arrived in Lancaster County on Monday for some first-hand feedback from poultrymen following the avian influenza epidemic that swept the county beginning last fall.

Specter's first stop was Dutch Dozens Farms owned by Claude Hess of Mastertsonville. After donning sanitary coveralls and boots, the senator accompanied Hess on a tour of his 81,500-bird layer facility.

At the conclusion of the tour, Specter underscored his feeling that victims of the outbreak had been inadequately compensated by the federal government.

"Farmers are entitled to receive fair market value for their birds, and the compensation failed to cover this," Specter stressed.

Another of the senator's prime concerns dealt with preventive medicine.

"I'm determined to try to avoid this type of thing in the future," he stated, vowing to support methods of safeguarding the state's \$400 million-a-year poultry industry.

Claude Hess showed the senator the new system of packaging eggs using plastic crates that are sanitized after being used. Specter noted that such a system was a vast improvement over the previously used cardboard cartons that received no cleaning between usages.

He also expressed concern over the criteria for implementing depopulation of infected flocks, inferring that some of Pennsylvania's flocks may have been destroyed unnecessarily. The senator called for more research into the threshold used for depopulation and stated that the studies should be supported at the federal level.

Following the farm tour, Specter met with poultry farmers at the Mastertsonville firehall. With pen and paper in hand, he made notes as farmers related their own opinions on the federal rescue effort.

Of those farmers in attendance,

Bainbridge poultryman Charles Brooks was one of the hardest hit by the epidemic. Brooks lost 42,000 chickens between October 26 and November 3, about one week before a state of emergency was declared. Because only those flocks depopulated by the Task Force qualified for indemnity, Brooks received no federal compensation for his birds.

"Nobody told me about the indemnities that were coming, so we sold the birds "(for slaughter)," Brooks said.

He estimates that the money received for his birds, along with funds provided by the state for cleanup and disinfecting, covered only half of his losses. And with half of this money needed to satisfy interest on loans, the poultryman told Specter that there was a very good possibility that he would lose his farm as a result of the disease.

Another farmer suffering substantial losses was Paul Wolgemuth of Elizabethtown. Wolgemuth and his father, Paul Sr., lost not only their flock of 70,000 layers, but 80,000 replacement pullets, as well.

Though the younger Wolgemuth stated that the indemnity "pretty well covered our cash losses," the fact that their farm was out of production for six months when egg prices peaked, did hurt their operation considerably.

Other farmers in attendance echoed Wolgemuth's sentiments concerning down-time losses.

Being out of production from December through March was a crippling blow, according to Claude Hess, who's layer flock was depopulated during the first week of December.

But even more frustrating, according to Hess, was the fact that the Task Force depopulated his flock despite laboratory test results from Ames, Iowa, showing his flock to be free of the highly pathogenic strain of avian influenza. (During the period when Hess' flock was destroyed, only those flocks diagnosed as "high path" qualified for depopulation.)

Claude Hess calculates that



U.S. Senator Arlen Specter confers with Lancaster County poultrymen at the Mastertsonville firehall during Monday's meeting on avian influenza.

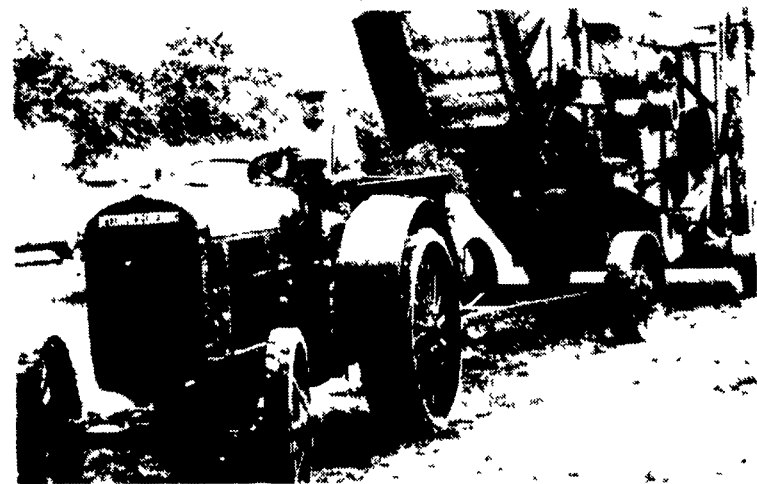
having his layer house empty this winter cost him \$250,000.

With the depopulation of a Lancaster County layer flock yesterday, the Task Force has only one remaining flock to eliminate in its latest campaign against flocks showing positive serology, or those birds having avian flu antibodies in their blood.

To date, 2,183,261 birds with positive serology have been killed, bringing the total avian flu toll in Pennsylvania to over 16 million birds. The depopulation has involved 410 premises, 217 of which have repopulated.

According to Pennsylvania Poultry Federation spokesman Tim Allwein, USDA has promised

that any delays involved with the depopulation of the last serologically positive flock (located in Berks County) will not delay lifting the quarantine. Allwein said USDA hopes to complete cleanup and disinfecting by August 31, with lifting of the quarantine projected for late September or early October.



James C. Frampton, vice president of the Eastern Shore Threshermen & Collectors Assoc., Inc. is shown with his 10-20 McCormick-Deering tractor pulling the wheat thresher - a feature of the 24th annual Wheat Threshing, Steam and Gas Engine Show on Aug. 3-5.

Threshermen to gather

FREDERALSBURG, Md. — Now in its 24th year, the Eastern Shore Threshermen and Collectors Association, Inc. is expecting thousands of people during their three day event to be held next Friday through Sunday.

Already vans, campers and cars are arriving and by show time the grounds will look like a city of trailers and automobiles, awaiting the collection of antique farm machinery, the "good old time entertainment," and a warm reunion with friends.


The association has members from 20 states and over 100 "merchants" show up annually to display their wares at the Flea

Market.

Besides the main attraction of the Wheat Threshing, there will be demonstrations of a rock crusher; saw mill; shingle mill; straw baling with a hand fed, wire tie machine and train rides on "Smokey Joe," a miniature steam train.

Steam and gas engines, real and homemade models, will be displayed from members' collections from as far away as Florida and Massachusetts.

The show grounds are located on Route 313 between Denton and Federalsburg, Md. The admission, and parking are free. Plenty of good food is available.

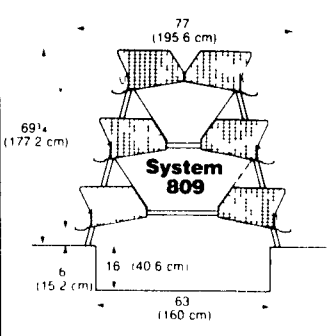


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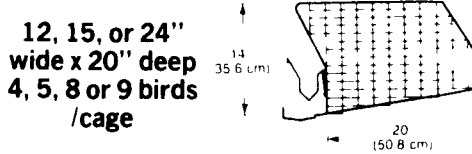
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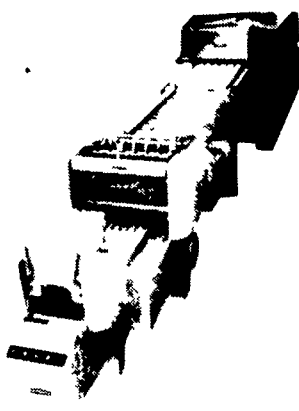


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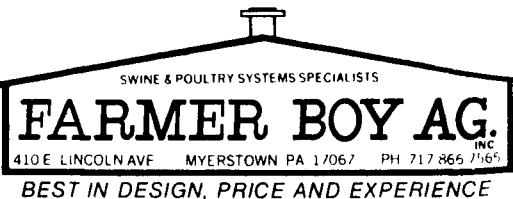
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