

Pork Council addresses identification, sulfa issues

DES MOINES, Iowa — Delegates at the 1986 Annual Meeting of the National Pork Producers Council (NPPC) in St. Louis, March 11-12, approved two producer task force reports and resolutions on various subjects ranging from advertising to food safety practices.

The report of the Antibiotics/Sulfa Task Force, chaired by Mike Wehler, a producer/director from Plain, WI, included a recommended five-point program to combat currently high sulfa residue levels in hog carcasses at times of slaughter. The Task Force recommended support of mandatory identification to the point of origin.

Noting that USDA fully intends to reduce sulfa residue violations if the industry does not address the problem itself, the Task Force report said an on-going national education program can make producers more aware of the

problem and the tools available to avoid it. The report said good management and the use of granulated sulfamethazine products can ensure sulfa-free pork. It encouraged enforcement by the Food and Drug Administration on the use of soluble sulfa powder. The Task Force report encouraged a producer/industry protection program by testing feed, ingredients and hogs.

The Task Force indicated that sulf-safe pilot projects in Illinois and Iowa were successful in demonstrating the various causes of sulfa residues. The pilot projects also provide a framework to field test new fast-screening testing methods.

The Swine ID Task Force, chaired by NPPC vice president Tom Miller, a producer from Maricopa, AZ, recommended support of mandatory identification of all slaughter hogs back to the last farm of ownership. It

also encouraged packers to share health and carcass quality information with pork producers. USDA Veterinary Services is involved in research and development of a bar coding system and will evaluate its practical application in a swine identification program. Meantime, preliminary work at Michigan State University shows promise that a system of identification, using the slap tattoo

along with some new electronic data recording equipment, can help provide useful carcass and health information back to producers.

The 1986 NPPC Delegate Body did not consider a recently completed report by a jury panel of industry representatives that recommended the pork industry move toward a goal of pseudorabies (PRV) eradication.

The NPPC Executive Committee earlier had officially received the jury report and sent it to NPPC's PRV Oversight Committee for further evaluation. The committee is expected to review the jury report and will await the completion of PRV pilot projects in several states this fall before making a firm recommendation. NPPC delegates will make the ultimate decision for NPPC.

Delaware resumes poultry auctions

DOVER, DE — The Delaware Department of Agriculture has announced it is lifting the ban on public poultry auctions.

The ban had been placed on public auctions as a precaution against the spread of avian influenza (AI) by Secretary of Agriculture William Chandler, Jr. on January 24, 1986.

In announcing the lifting of the ban, State Veterinarian Dr. H.

Wesley Towers, Jr. said the Agriculture Department will not be relaxing health standards for poultry. "We will be inspecting all poultry sold at auctions for at least the next 30 days", said Towers.

At least 20 birds from each poultry flock owner will be tested, according to the State Veterinarian. In addition, poultry owners are being advised to take precautions including careful

observation of birds for signs of avian influenza.

The ban was lifted because there have been no further field cases of AI in the past 30 days.

Towers reminds poultry farmers and others that avian influenza is easily spread and although it is deadly to chickens and turkeys, it is not a risk to human health through direct contact or by consumption of poultry and eggs.



Maryland promotes poultry biosecurity

Bradley J. Hilty (right), an Extension agricultural agent in Wicomico County, on Maryland's lower Eastern Shore, discusses "Don't Yield to Visitors in Poultry Houses" sign with Randolph Clark, manager of the Southern States

Cooperative feed store outlet in Salisbury. Developed by the Mid-Atlantic Cooperative Extension poultry health and management unit, the sign is intended for display at feed stores throughout a five-state area. Participating feed

stores also will have MACE educational leaflets on bio-security and nutrition available for free pickup by poultry producers, especially those with small or specialty flocks.

NPPC to coordinate national pork checkoff programs

DES MOINES, Iowa — Noting that producer involvement is at an all-time high, Ron Kahle, president of the National Pork Producers Council, told elected delegates at the organization's annual meeting March 11 in St. Louis, that approval of the 100-percent national pork producer checkoff has set a new course for the nation's pork producers.

Kahle said that after the new checkoff goes into effect late in 1986, NPPC will continue to be the only organization completely devoted to developing and administering policy programs and projects that offer all pork producers the best opportunity for a reasonable profit.

The NPPC president said he hopes the members of the new independent Delegate Body and the new independent Pork Board will recognize that producers are not interested in development of a new bureaucracy but rather want the industry's existing resources and energy pooled to build a stronger, more effective pork industry.

"Shaping public policy is crucial to the survival of any industry in this modern day of rapid change," Kahle told producer-delegates. "For this reason, NPPC will continue to serve in the coor-

inating role of establishing long-range industry direction," he said. Preliminary results of a national survey now being conducted of NPPC members and non-members indicates that about 80 percent of producers believe the new Pork Board should be a collection and contracting body, with producer direction still coordinated through the NPPC and its member states. Complete results of the national survey are expected to be released this summer.

Kahle told delegates they should return to their home states and work hard for the selection of progressive, well-qualified pork producers to the independent Delegate Body whose members will be nominated this spring and elected by pork producers in a special election in every state later this summer.

"The caliber of people you nominate and elect within the next few months to serve on the independent Delegate Body will literally hold the destiny of the NPPC in their hands," the NPPC president said. He expressed the hope that the majority of Delegates at the 1986 NPPC Annual Meeting would constitute the independent Delegate Body, in order to assure consistent industry policy and programs.

It's no yolk:

Penn State researchers hope to develop hard-shelled egg

BY JULIE LALO
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UNIVERSITY PARK — If Penn State researchers had been around when nursery egg Humpty Dumpty had his great fall, they might have been able to save him. Or at least made him less likely to break.

At Penn State, poultry scientists are aiming for an egg with a tougher shell. To do that, says Roland Leach, they first have to unlock the secret behind the crystal structure of the sturdy, but fragile protection a chicken gives her eggs.

It started with manipulation of diet, the professor of poultry science says. He learned that manganese and copper deficiencies could cause chickens to lay "enlarged eggs with wrinkled shells."

And he discovered that the formation of the eggshell occurred a lot earlier in the process than prior research had indicated. Eggs are formed during a 24½-hour trip through a hen's oviduct, where they are developed from the inside, or yolk, out, the poultry scientist says.

"Now we know that the crystals are formed earlier, during the membrane formation, and feel that these early events of shell deposition may ultimately determine the structure of the shell which is deposited later in the shell gland," he says.

While a hen is busy making the membrane that we all know as the rubbery extra shell on a hard-boiled egg, she also starts to deposit the initial calcite crystals of the shell, Leach found.

Now he is left with more questions. "Do the initial crystal sites determine shell structure? How important is crystal structure to the strength of an egg? Lastly, how can this be manipulated?"

Leach is certain that if the right crystal structure can be established, he can make it an inherited quality which could be bred into egg-laying chickens.

"It is already done to generate thicker-shelled eggs," he says. In fact, thickness is a trait that will prevent 60 to 70 percent of egg breakage. But 30 to 40 percent of the breakage does occur to thick-shelled eggs, so other factors such as crystal structure are contributing to a weakness of the egg

shell.

"Creating a stronger eggshell barrier is important for economic, consumer and health reasons," says Herbert Siegel, head of the department of poultry science.

Broken eggs represent 6 to 8 percent of all U.S. eggs produced. "Checked" eggs, which contain cracks in the outer shell only, may be diverted to liquid or dried egg products, says Siegel. But leakers, which are eggs with broken membranes, cannot be used for human consumption. Penn State food science researchers are developing alternative uses for these.

"From a consumer point of view, to boil a soft-shelled egg only to have it crack before it has cooked will cause a producer to lose customers," Siegel adds. "Finally, there is always a potential when the shell is breached that undesirable flavors and organisms can invade the edible portion of an egg."

The creation of a more sturdy egg is so important to Leach that he calls his search for answers a "holy grail."

"The holy grail would be a fantastically strong egg," he says.

It is probably not ironic that the poultry scientist would use a religious reference to this most universal of foods, deeply embedded in the theological tradition. Says Siegel, "The egg and its creator, the chicken, are two of the few animal food items that have not been religiously or culturally prohibited in some part of the world."

Eggs and chickens are eaten worldwide, he says, unlike beef, which Hindus do not eat, or pork,

which the Jewish and Moslem faiths prohibit. In fact, increased egg sales, he says, do reflect this food's added significance during the spring holy days of Lent and Passover, appearing as it does in the Easter basket and on the seder plate.

Theological connection or not, Professor Leach will continue to search for his grail, while the old saw paraphrased might read, "You have to break a few eggs to keep most of them whole."

