

# Turkey Conference

(Continued from Page A1)

As the number of two-wage-earner households increases, Longacre predicts a rising demand for fully prepared meals that can be quickly cooked in a microwave oven. An increase in the number of single-person households also means more interest in easy-to-prepare meals, he says.

But Longacre cautioned that the turkey industry should not try to beat chicken at its own game by providing the same products. "We've got to work on developing turkey products that have their own identity," he stressed.

## A New Disease

With the turkey industry on a roll, producers should keep a wary eye on an emerging disease called reticuloendotheliosis (better known as RE), said New Bolton Center's Dr. Robert Eckroade.

Although the cancer causing RE virus has been identified only once in Pennsylvania, Eckroade cautioned that Marek's disease also came from obscurity and peaked from 1968 to 1970, when the disease claimed 40 million broilers.

RE was first identified in Kansas in 1958, and since that time has shown up in Minnesota, Virginia and Texas. Hosts for the disease include turkeys, ducks, geese and chickens. While the disease typically causes lesions on livers and enlarged spleens, Eckroade stressed that RE has no effect on human health and causes cancer only in poultry.

In two infected flocks in the United Kingdom, the disease was characterized by the occurrence of tumors and diarrhea, with mortality exceeding 20 percent. When birds are infected early in life they will probably shed virus for the rest of their lives, Eckroade said.

The veterinarian urged farmers to look closely at their condemnation rates and examine tumors in their birds. "It may be more widespread than we think," he said. "We don't want to bury our heads in the sand."

## Producer Panel

A panel of industry men discussing ways to improve flock performance rounded out the morning sessions. Included on the panel were Jim Skinner of Empire

Kosher, Mifflintown, Pa.; Jim Mitchell, Mitchell Consulting, Harrisonburg, Va.; Roy Alfree, Round Hill Farms, New Oxford, Pa.; and Ben Lybrand, Cuddy Foods, Inc., Marshville, N.C.

Lybrand kicked off the discussion, cautioning growers that while turkey's popularity continues to increase, total meat consumption in the United States continues to decrease, so competition for consumer dollars will intensify. "We're going to see competition from the red meats that we've never seen before," said Lybrand, pointing out that the recently instituted beef and pork checkoff programs will pump unprecedented amounts of capital into promotional programs.

Lybrand said successful turkey production largely depends on attention to five factors: feed quality, water quality, litter management, ventilation and the elimination of stress. While quality in most feed ingredients is not difficult to monitor, there's a great deal of variability in the quality of fats added to feeds, he said.

Lybrand urged producers to monitor nitrogen, E. coli bacteria and levels of solids in their water sources. On the subject of ven-

tilation, he pointed out that hens are more tolerant of impure air than are toms.

Round Hill's Roy Alfree emphasized the importance of litter management. "Don't skimp on the shavings in the brooder barn," he told growers. Alfree likes to keep at least six inches of shavings on the finishing barn floor as well, and insists on a source of heat to keep the litter as dry as possible. Alfree rotates his shavings regularly and has been able to keep his litter dry and disease-free for two to three years.

Jim Skinner agrees that supplemental heat in the finishing house is a must. He also finds that starting young birds on a vitamin E and selenium supplement has eliminated problems with deformed hearts.

## New Regs On Horizon

A new truck licensing law being proposed by the State General Assembly would require the purchase of a \$25 license to haul or sell live birds in Pennsylvania, according to Pennsylvania Poultry Federation executive director John Hoffman. Aimed at halting the spread of avian influenza, the legislation would not require the license when small numbers of birds are moved between farms. "We support the concept, because avian flu has to begin with a live bird," Hoffman said.

Hoffman also reported that the PPF board of directors approved a voluntary state indemnity checkoff fund in February. Aimed at lessening the effect of avian flu losses in the state, the fund would

also send a clear signal to legislators that the state's poultry industry is willing to share the financial burden when disease epidemics occur. Hoffman emphasized that the fund is not intended to replace state and federal support, but would protect the industry from backyard flocks, one of the industry's greatest poultry health threats. The federation has set a goal of \$250,000 for the fund and is requesting contributions at the following rates per 1000 birds: turkeys, \$1; broilers, 10 cents; layers, \$1; breeders, \$1.50; and pullets, 20 cents.

## Troubles With MG

Hoffman also warned growers that micoplasma gallisepticum, the poultry disease known as MG, is on the increase in Pennsylvania. "We have what certainly could be labeled a serious problem, which indicates the killed MG vaccine is no longer effective," he said. Although the live "F" strain vaccine is currently banned in the state, "We're going to have to turn to that to eliminate the disease," said the PPF spokesman. Hoffman said the industry is currently seeking approval from the Department of Agriculture to use the live strain vaccine before the virus makes serious inroads in commercial layer flocks. He acknowledged that the use of live vaccine would have to be tightly controlled in order to avoid causing problems in turkey and broiler flocks, and he called for input from the broiler and turkey industries on the issue.



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## Agway To Buy Farm Bureau

SOUDERTON — The Boards of Directors of Agway Inc. and Montgomery-Bucks Farm Bureau Cooperative Association have voted to approve an agreement by which Agway will purchase all of the asset of Montgomery-Bucks Farm Bureau. Once a final agreement is reached, the proposed transaction will be presented to Montgomery-Bucks Farm Bureau's shareholders for a vote.

The acquisition would include three feed mills and five farm stores and will be operated as a unit of Agway. Montgomery-Bucks Farm Bureau feed mills are located at Souderton, Shoemakersville, and Mifflinburg. Farm store locations are Collegeville, Souderton, Dublin, Bechtelsville, and Warriors Mark.

Montgomery-Bucks Farm Bureau, formed in 1936, has 1,200 members and 100 employees at eight facilities and at its

headquarters in Souderton.

Michael Zapach has served as general manager and will continue to manage the operation as a unit of Agway. Farm Bureau labeled products will continue to be sold at these locations for the immediate future. Agway products and services will be added as soon as possible.

Employees of both organizations are committed to working closely to ensure a continuation of member service.

According to Maynard Rothenberger, Montgomery-Bucks Farm Bureau board chairman and president, the asset purchase is designed to maximize operating efficiencies while maintaining farmer control for the benefit of the members and other customers of both Agway and Montgomery-Bucks Farm Bureau. This transaction offers many advantages to farmers in the geographic areas served.