

Compound Rids Chicken Houses Of Insulation Pest

WASHINGTON, D.C. — A compound registered to control cattle and swine parasites can be put into chicken feed to halt a mealworm that wrecks the insulation in modern poultry houses, a U.S. Department of Agriculture researcher has found.

"Just two parts per million of ivermectin killed nearly 100 percent of lesser mealworms and

their adult form, the darkling beetle, in five-week tests involving 600 broiler chickens," said animal scientist Richard W. Miller of USDA's Agricultural Research Service.

"So far, we have found no residues in the chickens' livers, so there shouldn't be any in the meat," he said. The liver acts as a blood filter that traps foreign

chemicals entering the body.

He said the mealworm is not an internal parasite of chickens, but would consume the compound when it eats spilled chicken feed.

"Although mealworms have been implicated in the spread of some diseases or parasites among chickens," Miller said, "they cause damage primarily when, as larvae, they burrow into and

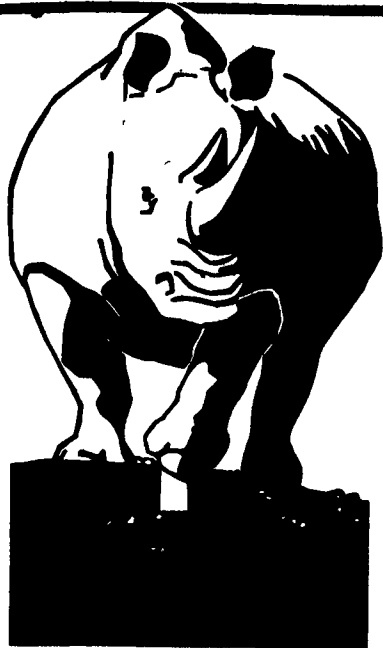
destroy the insulation of chicken houses. The loss of insulation reduces the ability to control the temperature of the houses. This could result in less efficient growth of the birds."

Figures aren't available on dollar losses from damaged insulation, but "a recent nationwide survey of broiler producers puts the lesser mealworm at the top of

the list of problems that poultry farmers want controlled," said Stephen Pretanik, director of science and technology at the National Broiler Council.

Miller said more research on ivermectin is needed before it can be registered with the Food and Drug Administration for use in chicken houses. It is currently approved for use as an injection to control stomach and intestinal roundworms in cattle, swine and horses. It also is used as a once-a-month treatment in dogs to prevent heartworm infections.

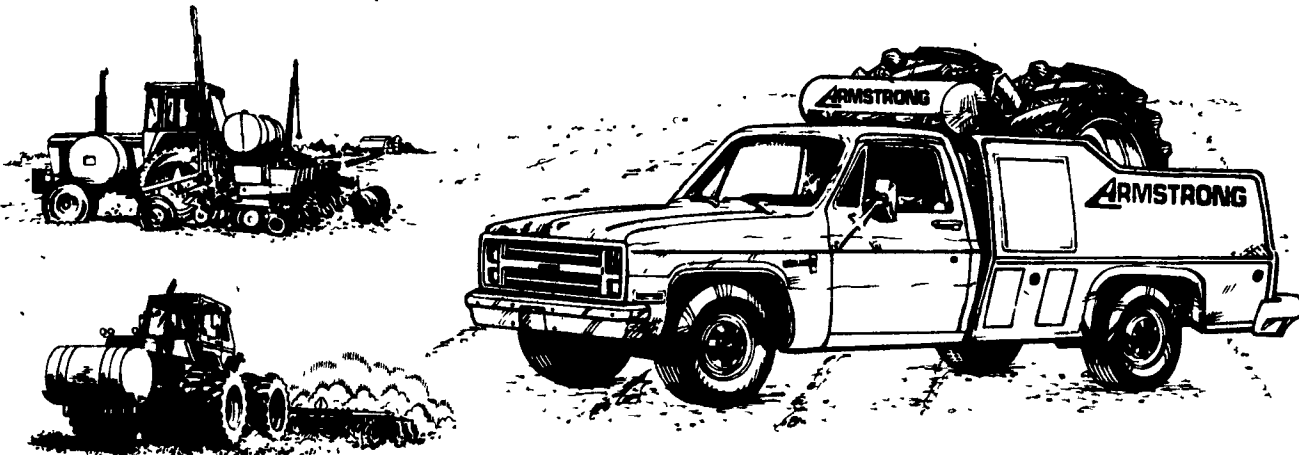
"While putting ivermectin into feed would be convenient for farmers," Miller said, "we plan to test other methods such as baits and sprays to find the most efficient way to dispense the compound."



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