

# Salmonella Threatens

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ors tested positive; and brooms and hoses were moved from area to area."

## Source of contamination

A possible source of contamination is animal protein products being fed to poultry. In the Northeast alone, said *Poultry Times*, "fears have resulted in 50,000 tons of animal protein being taken out of feed."

At the 1989 Annual Congress of the American Veterinary Medical Association, SE as a pathogen was studied. The views of several scientists gathered there were plain: SE was a threat, and, indeed, the industry must be aware of the problem and take steps to stop the spread of the bacteria.

The scientists reviewed the facts about SE. From the November/December 1989 issue of *Egg Industry*, these were some of their findings:

- People are being infected by SE through eggs, particularly Grade A egg shells.

- Certain types of Salmonella are present in the intestines of many birds and can infect eggs by fecal contamination and penetration of the shell after the egg is laid.

- In Pennsylvania studies, SE was obtained from some dead-in-

shell embryos of multiplier flocks shown to be positive on serology.

- Between 1985 and 1988, there were 140 confirmed outbreaks of SE in humans in 12 states, resulting in 4,976 illnesses and 30 deaths. In 1989 alone there were 71 outbreaks of SE.

- We have no knowledge of how many of the nation's flocks are infected, or the proportion of individual hens which may be excreting SE in a specific unit.

- 40,000 salmonella sp. isolates are derived from patients each year in the U.S., or about 20 cases per 100,000 population. Approximately 10 percent of the actual cases are diagnosed, so the true incidence of salmonella is relatively high. (Author's emphasis.)

- There is a close relationship, the scientists agree, between infection of flocks and outbreaks of the disease in consumers.

- Mishandled eggs are the most important vehicle for transmission of SE. Unfortunately, washing eggs may contribute to enhanced eggshell penetration by SE.

## Stop the spread

What can be done to stop the spread of the bacteria?

Dr. Larry Shipman, a USDA epidemiologist, spoke at the

American Veterinary Medical Association 1989 Annual Congress. According to *Egg Industry*, Shipman said the problem "does not lie at any specific point in the production chain, but will require concerted action by breeders, producers, and egg packers."

"Each segment of every food industry, from production to consumption, shares responsibility for this effort," said Kradel.

But often it takes work by regulatory agencies, in particular the FDA, to ensure that the bacteria is properly disposed of. And several steps have recently been taken to stop the spread of SE.

## Mandatory testing

Early in 1989, the FDA began to prepare a mandatory testing program for SE in an announcement to the board of the United Egg Producers. The board had already voted to support a mandatory SE testing program for breeder and multiplier flocks, but not for layer flocks.

According to the May 8, 1989 *Poultry Times*, a voluntary testing program for breeder and multiplier flocks was begun in 21 states, and the SE problem was found in 'about half' of those states, said Michael Holbrook, director of the USDA Agricultural Marketing Service Poultry Division. The

problem was focused mainly in the Northeast.

"Thirty-one flocks have been depopulated and a few flocks now are directing eggs to pasteurization," said Holbrook. Depopulated flocks, said Holbrook, include one primary breeder flock and three multiplier flocks.

In a plan to start extensive hen testing, the USDA met in mid-December last year with egg industry leaders and FDA officials

to lay out a plan to test flocks for SE. According to *Poultry Times*, USDA will perform the testing, while FDA's role will be more at monitoring eggs as they reach the consumer.

Next issue: What types of SE monitoring are being conducted? Also, a tour of the Pennsylvania Animal Health Laboratory in Summerdale, a central diagnostic center operated by the Bureau of Animal Industry.

## Farm Forum

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months time the manufactured price of milk in the United States has dropped \$2.71 per cwt.

Where are all the people that thought it was so terrible when the M. and W. escalated dramatically last fall and early winter. Never before has there been such a dramatic movement in the M. and W. prices as has happened in the last two months.

Some milk industry foundation leaders at a conference in January said they would bring the M. and W. under control, but no one thought even these processors coupled with the National Cheese Exchange would be able to accomplish what has happened in two months.

These price declines will mean dairy farmers across the U.S. will see \$240,000,000 less in their milk checks each month. The average producer will lose approximately \$1,200 per month. The sad part is we are nowhere

near the bottom of the price decline.

## Blend Prices

The lowest blend price forecasted for Federal Order #2 for June of 1990 was \$11.15 per cwt. With all these unsettled conditions going on in the industry, dairy farmers now may see Junes' blend price go down to \$10.50 per cwt. This will be lower than 1979's price of \$11.03 per cwt.

Imagine - January 1990 record high blend prices at \$15.17 - six months later dairy farmers receive a price that is comparable to 1978 and 1979.

## Let's do something

I would like to think by now that dairy farmers would think they have had enough.

School teachers in many districts are receiving approximately a 9% annual increase in salary and they are pounding on the doors of the Harrisburg House Chambers asking for equality. School teach-

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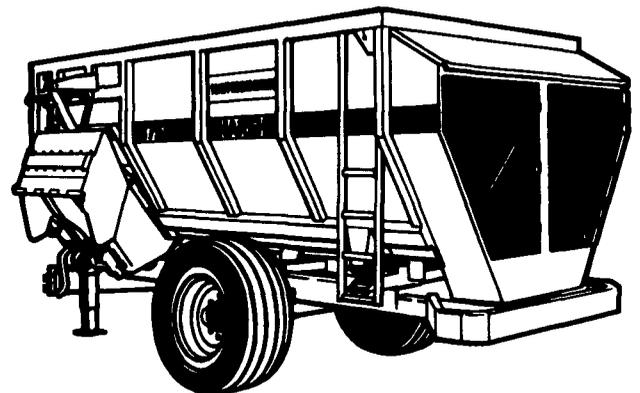
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