


Farmers' Association Membership Hits Peak

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ASCITES IN MEAT-TYPE POULTRY

H. S. Siegel
Professor of Poultry Science

Ascites (pronounced as-cite-ees), commonly known as "water belly," is a condition in which the abdominal area of the bird becomes filled with a clear or sometimes straw-colored liquid that may lead to the death or the condemnation of the carcass.

Although the incidence of ascites is greatly increased in the high altitude regions of the world, the condition is also becoming an increasing problem at lower altitudes.

A number of situations seem to influence the appearance of the condition: 1) Low oxygen tension (as occurs in high altitude); 2) poorly ventilated environment (as may occur in winter when windows or curtains are closed or restricted); 3) respiratory diseases; 4) rapid growth rates; 5) high energy rations; 6) toxins; and 7) some feed additives.

As can be seen from the above list, situations that physiologically create either an oxygen deficit or a

demand for more oxygen seem to increase the possibility of ascites. This increased metabolic demand for oxygen exceeds the bird's cardiopulmonary (heart, blood vessel, and lung) capacity and the ascites syndrome can be triggered.

Research at Penn State by Drs. Robert Wideman, Robert Owen, and their colleagues using a hypobaric chamber that mimics the high altitude situation is studying the factors involved in ascites.

The researchers have been able to predict, in many cases, which birds are most susceptible to the condition by finding abnormal electrocardiograms (EKGs) in very young chicks long before the condition occurs. Interestingly, a

GETTYSBURG (Adams Co.) — 1990-1991 membership in the Adams County Farmers Association (ACFA) is at an all-time high for this time of the year, according to John Hess, former ACFA president and current membership chairman.

As of the beginning of the year, the association had 756 paying members. The ACFA is an affiliate of the Pennsylvania Farmers' Association (PFA), established in

parallel condition called sudden death syndrome in turkeys — which is characterized by a round, flabby heart — may also be predicted by EKG measurement.

Further descriptions of the ascites condition in chickens can be found in the following scientific journals: "Zootechnica International," Vol. 11, pp. 58-62, 1988, R. J. Julian; "Avian Diseases," Vol. 34, pp. 754-758, 1990, R. L. Owen et al.; "Monsanto Nutritional Update," Vol. 6, No. 2, pp. 1-7, 1988, R. F. Wideman; and "Poultry Science," Vol. 69, pp. 741-745, 1990, D. A. Witzel et al.

1950. PFA represents agricultural interests in Harrisburg, Washington D.C., and at the county level, with the support of more than 23,000 families.

"The PFA and the national organization to which it belongs — the American Farm Bureau Federation — enables its members to shape events beyond the fence line," Hess said.

"On the county level, the membership committee is strongly urging all members of ACFA to contact and sign up as many new members as possible to continue the deep and solid foundation between the public and the farming neighborhood," he said.

One incentive this year is to give away commodity baskets, consisting of produce and other goods made and raised only in Adams County, to three lucky winners in a membership incentive drawing in January.

Products within the baskets will be donated in part or in full by the association's membership, Hess

said. The ACFA Membership Kickoff Campaign began in earnest with a special meeting held at Spangler's Truck Stop, north of Gettysburg, in December last year.

The ACFA membership committee includes Hess; Elmer Smith, from the New Oxford area; Jack Bream of Orrtanna; Evelyn Waybright of the Barlow area; and Herb Lady of Biglerville. "But there's a whole lot more people out there in the different townships helping out," Hess said.

"We are requesting members of the organization to donate produce or other goods as a part of the basket to demonstrate the varied and widely-known agricultural products that are produced by members of the farming community in Adams County," Hess said.

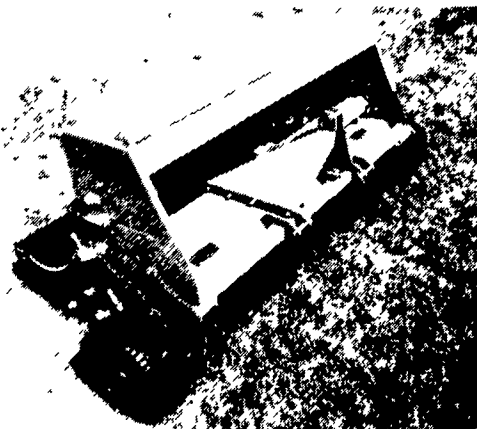
Anyone who would like more information or who would like to donate goods contact the association's secretary, Pamela Ketterman, at (717) 337-2845.

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