

Northeast Poultry Show Attracts Hundreds

Quality Assurance May Stem Foodborne Illness Problems

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ter on Wednesday morning that in the last decade, salmonella cases have doubled. And while better methods have been developed to identify and document outbreaks, little has been done to implement industry-wide programs to make sure, from producer to retailer, that SE and other foodborne diseases are kept in check.

In a listeria outbreak because of contaminated Mexican-style cheese in California recently, lawsuits totalling \$100 million were filed. The listeria bacteria was found "top to bottom" in a processing plant, said Doores. The company went bankrupt as a result, and not only were company officials fined heavily, many went to jail.

Education and enforcement about poultry production and preparation are critical if the problems of foodborne illnesses are stopped. And although the experts and the general public disagree on some of the concerns about food poisoning (scientists are more worried about microorganisms, and the general public worries more about pesticide residues in food), both agree that the perception of foodborne illness problems has risen in light of new outbreaks (particularly the recent E. coli in beef outbreak at a fast food outlet).

Companies can do a lot to protect themselves by training workers properly and keeping good records of the whole processing operation. Consumers need to understand how to prepare food



Charles McDowell

properly. Both need to be "pro-active," according to Doores.

In 1986, SE existed in 1 in every 100,000 eggs. Buy this year, there may be as many as 10 per 100,000 eggs.

What is needed in the industry, she said, is an "all-encompassing program," such as the Hazard Analysis Critical Control Points (HACCP) program which oversees quality control from pre- to post-harvest and beyond. HACCP can be implemented in these ways:

- On-farm investigation which includes possible pathogen identification and traceback.
- Rapid-method identification, such as using something equivalent to an inexpensive and quick "litmus test" to check for pathogens in the production environment.
- Slaughter and process checks

to prevent cross-contamination.

• Irradiation, which will rid the problems at the source.

• Food service and retail activities to help educate those who prepare food. "We don't test our handlers," she said.

As part of a special Penn State graduate project, chief executive officers (CEOs) of several large poultry producing companies were asked what a HACCP program would do for them. While it could



Dr. Stephanie Doores

be costly to implement, the benefits will include improved sales, increased profits, extended product shelf life, decreased processing costs, and more consumer confidence in the safety of the product, according to the report. The CEOs rated improved sales of the product as the number one benefit of the program.



Dr. Richard Reynnells

Animal Welfare

Washington Scene

Poultry producers and other food industry representatives can find legislative representation in Washington. But more and more, legislators are becoming less familiar with how animal research is conducted, why, and how farmers raise their animals, according to Dr. Richard Reynnells, USDA, who spoke about animal welfare and the Washington scene on Wednesday morning at the show.

Producers should be warned: animal rightists are on the move, and their long-term goal (50 years in the making) will be to totally liberate animals from human use, according to Reynnells. And they have learned to manipulate the legislative system to their own ends.

Reynnells said that the animal

rightists have a clearcut agenda, which includes using terrorism against animal operations and scare tactics toward producers to meet those goals. For producers, it is time to get involved.

First, producers must band together in support of their industry. Next, they must take a more serious look at all aspects of their operation and make the changes necessary to process animals as they see fit, he said.

"Public perception is going to make us or it's going to break us," he said. "The bottom line is *not* to provide ammunition for people who are trying to destroy your industry." Producers should take care there are no dead birds falling off trucks onto the road, and handle the problem of downed animals on the farm in a quick and efficient way.

Producers should contact several industry organizations that help the producer cope with the animal rights/welfare issue, such as the Animal Welfare Information Center (301) 504-6212, Putting People First (202) 364-7227, and the Animal Industry Foundation (703) 524-0810 and be placed on their mailing list for information.

Producers must work together to fight for their industry over the long term.

"Unfortunately, this animal rights thing is never going to be solved in my lifetime, or yours," he said.

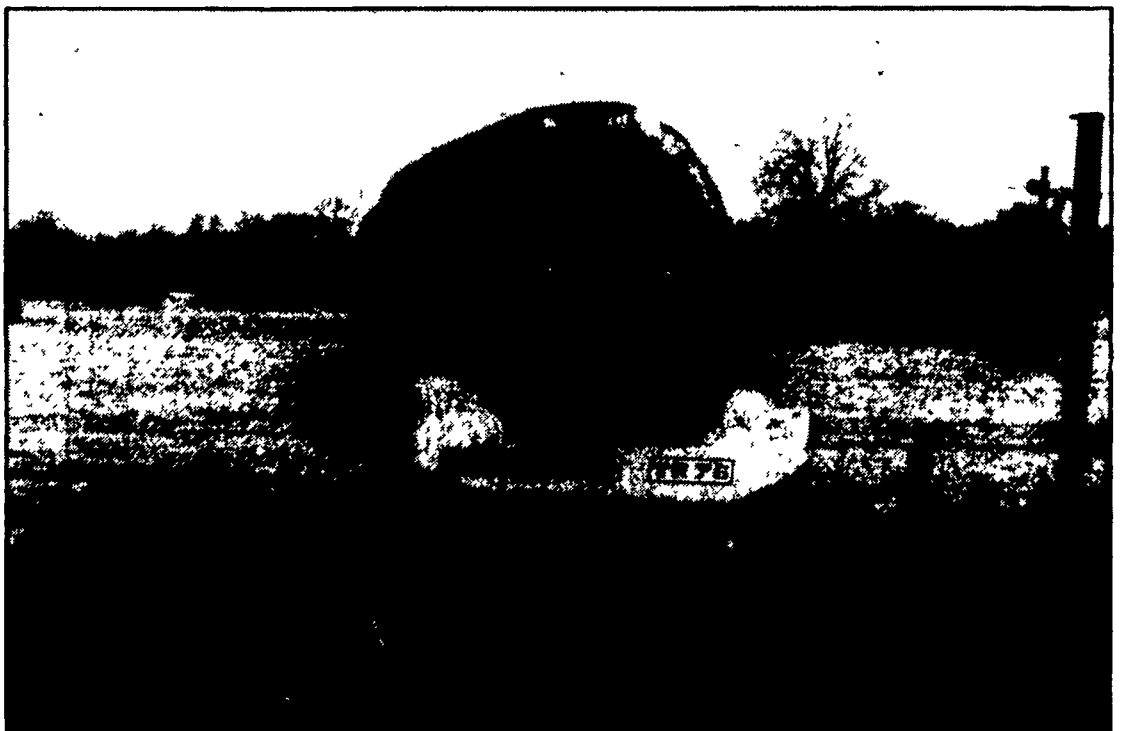
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