

Rodent Control Vital

(Continued from Page A1)

Industry representatives, together with careful research undertaken by USDA and extension, have shown a strong link between SE positive tests on flocks and SE in rodents.

Snader discovered that, using the rodent index established by USDA-APHIS, Dutch Country once had a severe infestation, with 25 mice or more captured per house. This high infestation was battled effectively using a closed bait system with systematically changed bait material.

Within a short time, the rodent index indicated the problem was under control, from 25 mice down to five mice per house in a week.

"We have made a difference in controlling mice in the layer houses," said Snader.

The critical part of rodent control is making sure the traps are set properly, inspecting the baits and making the count on a scheduled basis, and changing the bait active ingredients every three to four weeks.

Snader emphasized the importance of "staying after" mice.

"We have taken one giant step in controlling SE. It's possible. It works."

Scott Buckwalter, manager of Espenshade Farms, told the producers it's important to keep the rodent index "up to snuff." Also, traps should be placed anywhere there is a possible mice infestation, including under the roof.

Buckwalter said that, in his experience, Espenshade keeps a careful check of the index rating to keep rodent control, and thus disease, in check on the farm.

Dr. David Henzler, epidemiologist with the SE Pilot Project/USDA-APHIS-VS operations center, worked on a program involving more than a hundred volunteer farms and the effectiveness of rodent indexing.

What they studied was the effectiveness of rodent indexing and how several different rodent control programs compare to each other.

What researchers know is that mice are a significant source and amplifier of SE in successive flocks, even after thorough cleaning and disinfection (C&D) of the houses.

In the rodent index category, less than 10 mice per week per house in the traps indicates a low infestation, moderate infestation equals 11-25 mice per week per house, and 26 mice or more per house per week indicates high infestation.

A significant finding, according to Henzler, is that with a high mice infestation, producers were four times more likely to have SE on the farm.

The researchers studied a variety of baiting systems, including open and closed baiting and non-existent baiting.

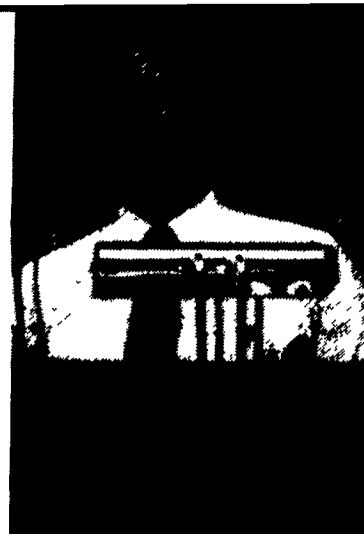
The most significant discovery: a closed baiting system, using different active ingredients on a regular basis, rotating no less than once a month, with closed traps every



Dr. Bonnie Buntain, director of the USDA Pre-Harvest Food Safety Agency.

30 feet or less, was most effective in reducing mice populations in houses. The closed bait systems use PVC pipe with a 1 1/2-inch inside diameter and measure 18 inches long. The traps must be placed everywhere, including below the houses and in any spaces above, because mice will crawl anywhere.

Dr. Bob Eckroade, University of Pennsylvania New Bolton Center Laboratory of Avian Medicine and Pathology, said that food safety remains an issue that must be addressed.



Dale Snader, Dutch Country Egg Farms.

Even though the issues are often blown up in the media, and everybody thinks they are at risk, said Eckroade, they are, to some degree. "Foodborne illness is on the 'front burner,'" said Eckroade.

Eckroade showed an advertisement that ran in a local newspaper for a law firm that handled lawsuits for people who are victims of SE poisoning.

Although SE has claimed the media spotlight the past several years, campylobacter, also a bacteria present in poultry, is perhaps as big or as large a problem.



Larry Weaver, Beltzel's Spraying, Witmer.

While the old cliché about "cook it properly and it will be absolutely safe" still holds true, consumer groups pressure the government to handle the problem at the producer level.

And while it is not feasible to completely eradicate all foodborne pathogens, with the advent of the Pennsylvania Egg Quality Assurance Program (PEQAP), already there has been effectiveness in controlling national SE outbreaks.

Eckroade cited the work of the SE Pilot Project and USDA/ (Turn to Page A35)

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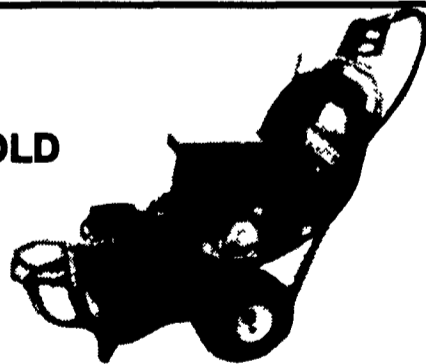


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