

Protecting Flock Health Focus Of Poultry Progress Day

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Dunn told nearly 200 poultry producers and agri-industry representatives at the meeting that the University of Pennsylvania at New Bolton Center has been looking at 26 suspected IBV cases in the fall and winter of 1994-1995. Of the 26 cases, 20 involve broiler flocks with a mortality ranging from 6-23 percent. Of the 26 cases, 11 have tested positive for positive IBV isolation. Three cases are suspect, three cases are negative, and nine cases are in progress.

But what worries veterinarians looking at the disease is that six cases make up an "untypable" field strain. The cases involve strains that are not the typical Massachusetts, Connecticut, or Arkansas, but "a variant that has no name," said Dunn. In other words, the untypable field strain is different from the rest and veterinarians are puzzled as to how to treat it.

IBV onset in flocks brings about a host of health problems that lead to substantial decreases in market weight and increases in condemnation. The disease attacks the upper respiratory tracts of birds, which paves the way for lethal bacterial infections such as pneumonia to occur. When the birds are examined, they exhibit lungs filled with fluid. The lungs and heart are covered with a mucus-like exudate.

There are a total of 15 known U.S. and 24 known worldwide strains of the "coronavirus" that is IBV. Vaccinations are applied against specific strains and work well to boost immunity in the birds, but there is only a limited benefit of using vaccines against other types of strains that the vaccine was not meant for.

In Pennsylvania, the most common strains are the Mass. and Conn. types, and vaccines have been developed for both. Other

common ones are the Arkansas, JMK, Florida, and Del. O72.

Producers should immunize at one day old and put a field booster in the water at about day 10. The important thing to remember, according to Dunn, is to get the vaccine from the bottle to all birds in the flock on the premise as soon as possible.

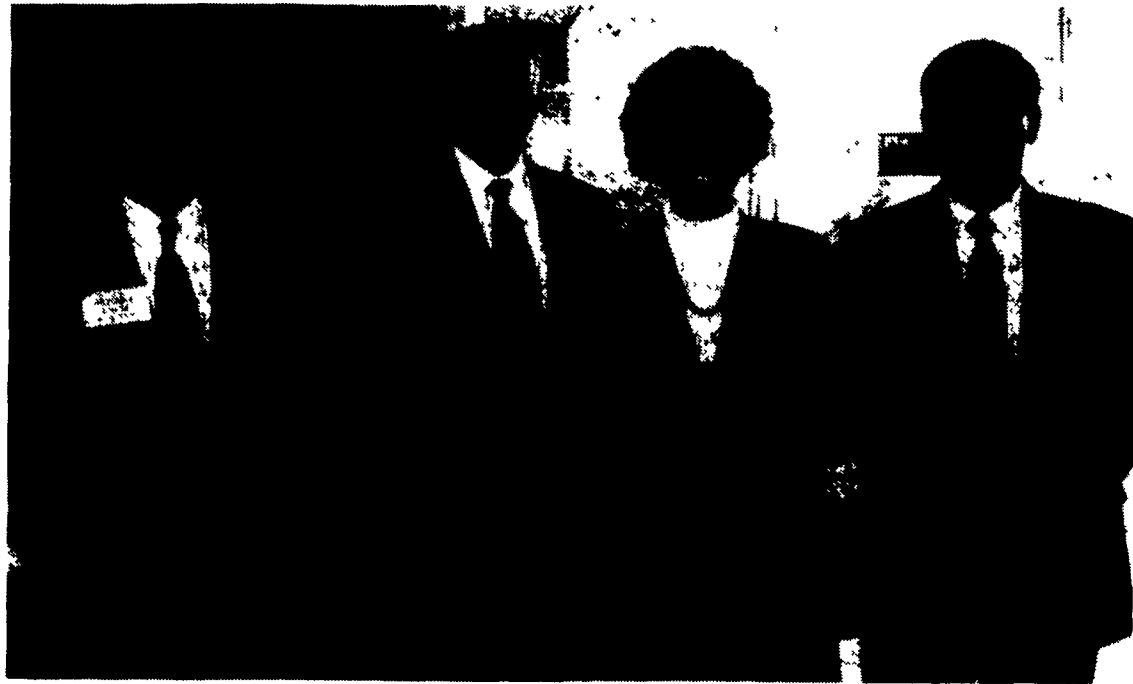
What worries veterinarians is the potential for the virus to change with the repeated passing of a certain strain from chicken to chicken. Of those six untypable strains, Dunn said it is unknown if the new strain is a result of a virus mutation.

Dunn said that Penn State has looked at three cases of IBV isolation, with one case in progress. A sentinel bird study is looking at the effects of the virus from selected pathogen-free birds placed in a flock to measure the effects of the virus in the house.

Perhaps in the future a vaccine will be available with multiple serotype protection, according to Dunn.

Another potential disease threat identified on some Pennsylvania flocks is reticuloendotheliosis (RE), according to Dr. Sherrill Davison, assistant professor, University of Pennsylvania, who moderated a panel on making decisions regarding flock health. What makes isolating RE difficult is that it mimics Marek's disease or lymphoid leukosis. Typical symptoms on birds include runting, tumors on organs, and general immunosuppression.

To further identify the problem and study ways to effectively treat RE, the state diagnostic laboratories (a consortium composed of the University of Pennsylvania, Penn State, and Summerdale) require producers to provide more blood samples from their flocks, according to Davison. The laboratories



A potential disease threat identified on some Pennsylvania flocks is reticuloendotheliosis (RE), according to Dr. Sherrill Davison, assistant professor, University of Pennsylvania, second from right. Davison moderated a panel on making decisions regarding flock health. From left, Nelson Groff, Heritage Poultry Management Service; Phil Nuss, Esbenshade Mills; Davison; and Rick Meck, Wenger Feeds.

need to find exactly what the extent of the RE problem is in the state. Twenty blood samples per flock are required, according to Davison.

Other problems facing layer houses include mostly egg yolk peritonitis caused by E. coli, Salmonella, and staph bacteria. Also, common problems facing the diagnostic laboratories from flocks include oral ulcers, fatty liver, and Marek's disease. Also, enteritis problems, LT, MG, and other infectious challenges are diagnosed by the state laboratories.

For house managers who require assistance with flock health challenges, there is a wealth of information available from breeders, feed suppliers, and the three state diagnostic laboratories, according to Nelson Groff, Herit-

age Poultry Management Service. The best tool to apply for diagnosing flock health is the serology tests, according to Rick Meck, Wenger Feeds.

But it's important that veterinarians and flock managers get out and look at the birds and see what kind of conditions may contribute to diseases before making any kind of treatment recommendations, according to Phil Nuss, Esbenshade Mills. He told the representatives to listen closely to flock managers, "because one statement could provide the answer to a disease problem."

A videotape from Arbor Acres emphasized the importance of ensuring proper ventilation in broiler and layer houses. Many of those who spoke at the poultry meeting re-emphasized how cru-

cial ventilation is to flock health and productivity.

But the winter of last year proved especially challenging to managers of curtain-sided houses who had to deal with what Thomas Pantano, broiler dept. of Pennfield Farms, called "ice machines." Condensation created walls of ice on curtain-sided houses that was difficult for managers to remove. As a result, many tried all sorts of ways to cover over the curtains to create environmental houses and to help insulate birds from last winter's bitter cold.

Also, managers had to deal with flooding as the record snowfalls began to melt last year. As a result, new techniques were put in place by many house managers to ensure that harsh winters don't create as

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