

Producers May Have To Rely

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equal about \$53 billion yearly), dealing with the "anti-ag" sector, including animal rightists and environmentalists, and science and technology, with biotechnology having a huge impact on diseases such as salmonella, MS, A.I., and others.

"It will be a different day, and it's going to be a different way" at USDA, said Luchsinger. "But we'll continue to be here and protect animal agriculture and work with you."

Egg Quality Assurance

One of the more successful industry quality assurance programs already in place is the Pennsylvania Egg Quality Assurance Program (PEQAP), started in February 1994. More than 80 percent of the state's layer flocks are voluntarily enrolled in the program, according to Dr. David Kradel, industry coordinator of the program, implemented by the Pennsylvania Poultry Federation.

Kradel said that a big part of PEQAP is the ongoing efforts to reduce the presence of salmonella enteritidis (SE) in flocks. PEQAP uses a hazards analysis critical control point (HACCP) philosophy that checks every level of production to ensure flocks are disease-free.

A large part of the PEQAP efforts are rodent control and complete disinfecting of houses between flocks.

Kradel was on hand at the PEQAP booth during the trade

show portion of the Northeast Poultry Show.

A.I. Threat

Also at the show, Dr. Charles Beard, vice president of research and technology at the Southeastern Poultry and Egg Association, spoke about the ongoing potential threat that avian influenza (A.I.) poses to North American flocks.

What is particularly worrisome is the fact that several states in Mexico have millions of layers and broilers heavily infected with the highly pathological strain of A.I. Twenty Mexican states have shown serological evidence of A.I., 11 states have isolated the A.I. virus, and two states have the highly pathogenic A.I. Three states that border Texas, including Tamaulipas, Nuevo Leon, and Coahuila, have serological evidence of A.I.

One of the states, Tamaulipas, has "depopulated" seven seropositive flocks. But their version of "depopulation" simply means the birds were marketed on the many open live bird sales in Mexico City, said Beard.

Many in Mexico who purchase the birds aren't aware of the disease symptoms until too late. They include an evidence of "no singing" or complete silence of the birds in houses, said Beard. The birds are "very, very depressed," he said, "with a swollen face, blue coloration to the comb, with severe egg production drops for layers." Beard said the disease is very disastrous and "kills birds overnight." A.I. also wreaks havoc on broilers

and turkeys.

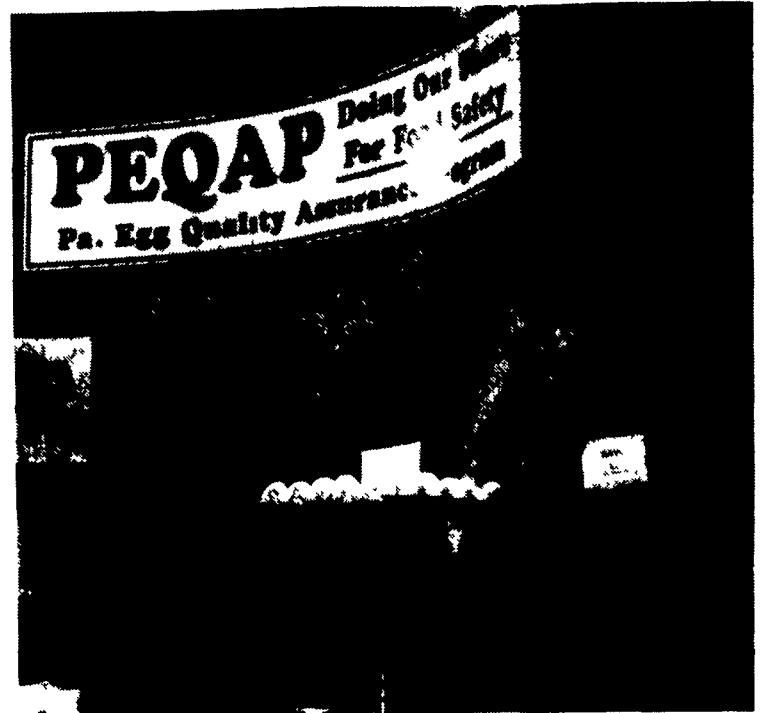
What makes Mexico so unique is that Mexico City itself, with a huge open market of live birds, is surrounded by many large poultry operations with thousands of infected birds. Waterfowl spread the disease throughout the region, much as what happened in Pennsylvania in 1983, when investigators found out that migratory waterfowl and open bird markets contributed to the outbreak.

Mexican states such as Queretaro, Jalisco, and Puebla have many examples of 10,000 or more birds infected with A.I. Problem is, in Mexico, there is little incentive to rid the flocks of A.I. since most producers in the country simply let birds die.

And Mexican officials claim that many flocks, which should be labeled as highly contagious, are not because in the laboratory, six out of eight birds must die. One flock lab test showed four out of eight birds dying, so it wasn't declared by the Mexican government as highly pathogenic.

Right now, "Everyone agrees that a vaccine will not rid Mexico's industry of A.I.," said Beard. The difficulty is often that the virus which causes A.I. can remain mild and not pose a problem — and then suddenly turn "hot" and become deadly, almost overnight.

Luckily, for U.S. poultry producers, new vaccines and vaccine technologies will provide a way to successfully control A.I. through "engineered" viruses in cell culture and recombinant technology. When these vaccines become licensed in the near future, it is possible that producers in the U.S.



Dr. David Kradel spoke about the successful PEQAP program during the Northeast Poultry Show.

could see nearly 100 percent protection from the disease.

Producers, meanwhile, should carefully inspect their production programs and ensure that proper biosecurity is in place. "In general, the industry is not really concerned that biosecurity is a necessary part of doing business," said Beard.

Also, live bird markets continue to pose a problem, as do migratory waterfowl. It is important that producers be prepared by joining together with a quality assurance program, to continue serological surveillance, to have a plan of action on the shelf, and check on the availability of a vaccine.

Whether there could be another outbreak such as happened in Pennsylvania in 1983, Beard said, "It's a possibility this can happen, and it is an industry decision as to whether it does or does not."

Egg Outlook

The second half of 1996 will be a challenging time for all of the egg industry, said Dr. Milt Madison, ag economist in the animal products branch of the USDA Economic Research Service.

Madison told about 125 poultry producers that because of a projected 10 percent rise in corn and soybean feed prices next year, producers could be facing a price that is 5 to 10 cents per dozen lower than 1995 prices in the second half of next year.

As a result, producers should look toward developing more

export markets for shell eggs and continue to expand the domestic and overseas markets for further processed eggs.

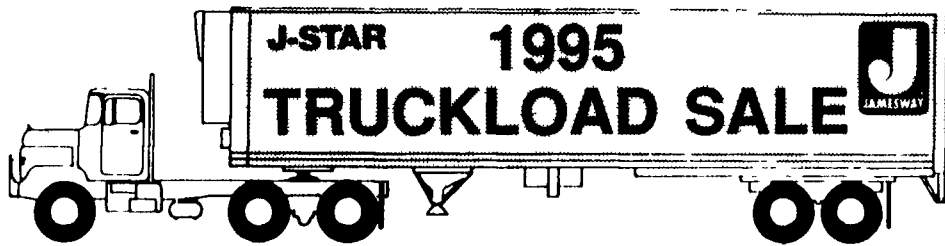
While the first and second quarters may prove stronger for eggs than 1995, the feed costs will continue to rise and continue to threaten profitability.

Pennsylvania ranks third in overall production of eggs, behind Ohio, second, and California, first. Indiana, fourth and Georgia, fifth are continuing to see increases and could overtake Pennsylvania in overall production as new houses are constructed.

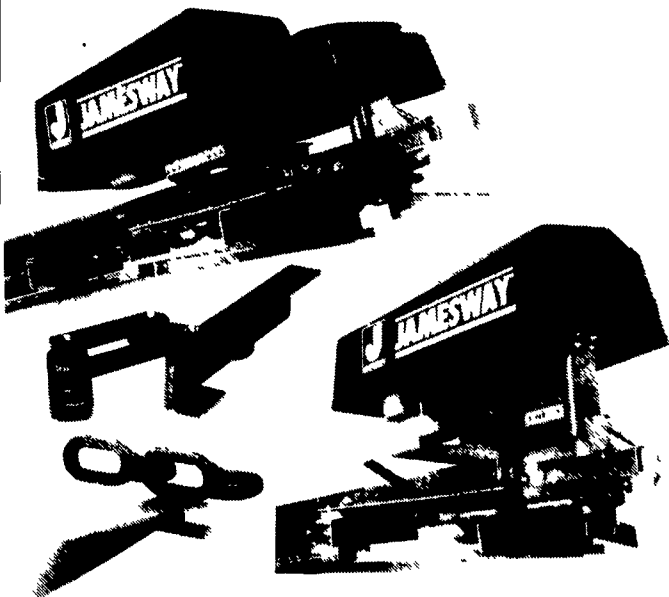
California leads the nation in egg production, producing 9 percent of the total, at 9 billion eggs. Pennsylvania produces about 5.5 billion eggs annually.

Projections for breaking and further processing in 1996 are about 1,600 million dozen eggs. Per person consumption of eggs in 1996 will be 250 per year, of which 60 per person are egg products. Twenty-eight percent of egg production in 1995 went to egg breakers.

Exports for eggs for 1995-1996 stand about about 200 million dozen, about 3 percent of the total eggs produced. Total exports of eggs are valued at \$150 million in 1994. In Jan.-July, 1995, total exports were valued at \$87 million, with Japan the leading market, followed by Canada and Mexico.



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