

Growers Should Beware Of Possible Fowl Pox Challenges In Flocks

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One, a "dry" pox, shows up as raised, dark skin lesions on the comb or wattles. There is also a "wet" form of the pox, which show up as caseous (cheesy), diphtheric lesions of the upper trachea and oral cavity of the birds.

Early dry pox lesions can show up as blisters, which can rupture. Soon dark, crusty material forms on the lesions. The wet pox lesions show up as caseous exudate, mostly on the forward portions of the trachea when the birds are examined.

The disease affects primarily mature birds and is rare in breeders, pullets, or broilers, said Ziegler. It is generally seen in the warmer summer months but year-round evidence of the disease in houses has been seen.



Dr. Andre F. Ziegler

Some of the challenges experienced by Midwest growers could be caused by simple lack of proper biosecurity measures, not just from the virus. Sanitary conditions could preclude their ability to rid the disease from flocks.

A.I. Update

Dr. David Kradel, coordinator of food safety activities with the Pennsylvania Poultry Federation, reminded the growers that concerns of biosecurity and keeping an eye on the latest developments regarding avian influenza (A.I.) should be of utmost concern.

A layer flock was discovered having a nonpathogenic form of A.I. and was depopulated immediately last month. The fear is that this could be a repeat of the situation of the mid-1980s when a non-pathogenic virus turned pathogenic and A.I. decimated millions of

birds in the state.

Another flock is undergoing testing for evidence of the non-pathogenic strain and has experienced some mortality. Some smaller live bird flocks have experienced 100 mortality from the "nonpathogenic" virus. About four growers have suffered substantial losses already, many

guinea fowl.

Biosecurity is tantamount more than ever. A guide, "Biosecurity In the Poultry Industry," is available for \$15. It was published by the American Association of Avian Pathologists.

Growers can obtain a copy of the guide by calling Kim at New Bolton at (610) 444-4282.

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"We are seeing more of this virus in Pennsylvania," Ziegler told those at the meeting. In January of 1996, the lab had seen more than in the past 12-month period — four cases in all. The virus can have regional variations in terms of strain, and varies for whatever reasons.

"Here in Pennsylvania we're seeing more than we usually do, I think," said Ziegler.

Between Sept. 1995-Sept. 1996, there were 21 cases that were reported to the Pennsylvania Diagnostic Laboratories, including wet and dry cases. Of the 21, 18 were from commercial egg layers (11 dry, 5 wet, and 2 both).

The Midwest and Pacific Northwest see more of the less-common wet pox, and the Midwest in general sees more pox cases, for which research still doesn't have a reason.

Average mortality for the birds that exhibit the wet variety of the virus averages 5-10 percent, and some growers have seen greater than 30 percent.

Layers are affected by the pox from 29-112 weeks of age, and the average is 50.1 weeks, according to Ziegler. Thirty-to 35 weeks of age is most common, he said.

The course of the infection can last from 4 weeks to six months in the house. Production drops range from 1.5-2 percent (the lab has seen it go as high as 8 percent), and morbidity is sometimes greater than 15 percent (ranges from 15-20 percent).

There is a small increase in mortality, but not nearly as bad in the Midwest, which has been having extensive pox challenges.

The lab at New Bolton has been working on two different pox treatment projects. One of them examines the pox virus from a field strain and looking at why there are varieties of protection. Is it a "take" problem and does it have to do with how well the vaccine is administered (quality of injection site, etc.)? They are looking into two isolates, including comb and trachea lesions, and using different pools of virus. They are looking at company vaccine protocols and those results.

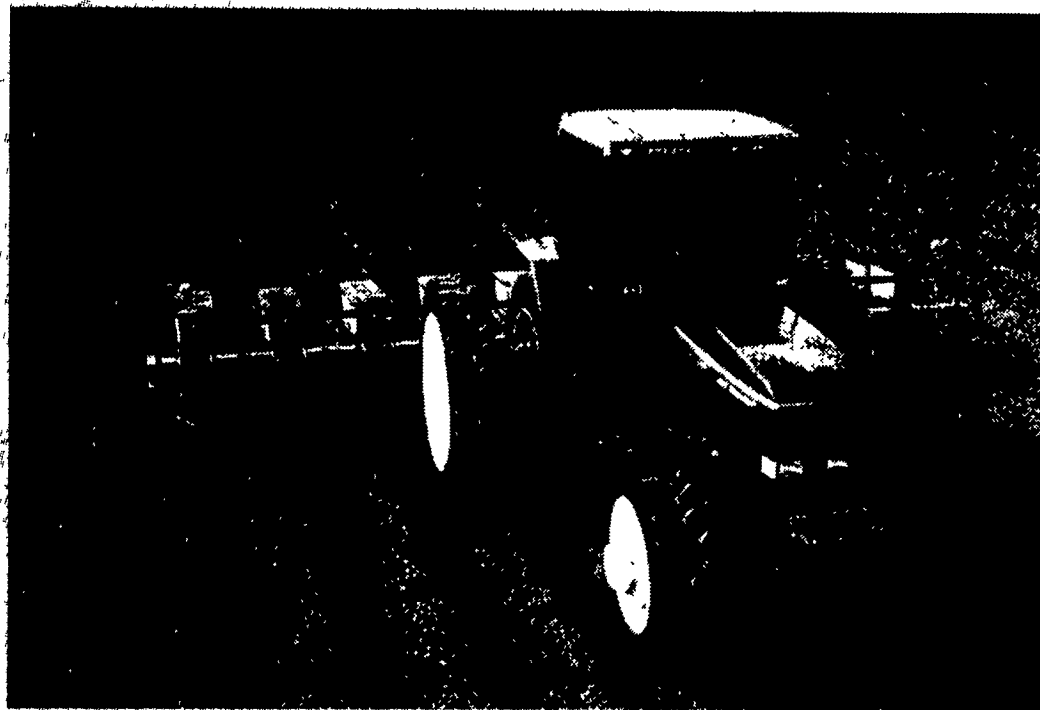
One finding: combination comb and trachea virus vaccines provided protection against tracheal lesions, but all vaccine protocols seemed to protect against tracheal lesions. More results of the vaccine combinations are pending.

The study also looked intently at the association between poor "takes" or how the needle vaccine was administered and poor protection. Could protection have something to do with bird breed types? More work is needed.

In the second study, continuing into the spring this year, the lab is evaluating three different immunity vaccination protocols using commercially available fowl pox and field virus with three different breeds. Researchers are looking at the results of the protocols in pullets and layers. Vaccines include commercially available pox, a field strain, and a USDA strain.

There were a total of 21 groups of pullets and layers.

Some early conclusions: all breeds demonstrated protection with field virus used as vaccination and challenge. But all commercially available vaccines are very similar, even if they are made by different companies.



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