

# Secretary Cancels Poultry Exhibits At Farm Show

HARRISBURG (Dauphin Co.) — Agriculture Secretary Samuel E. Hayes Jr. announced the cancellation of all live poultry and poultry-related product exhibits at the Pennsylvania Farm Show in January. This cancellation includes emu, ostrich, and rhea exhibits.

"This is strictly precautionary to prevent the possible transmission of the H7N2 avian influenza virus through exhibits at the show," Hayes said. "I am pleased we have had no new incidences of avian influenza in Pennsylvania since July. However, we must not relax our vigilance. The commercial poultry industry is extremely vital to Pennsylvania's agricultural economy. I am going to do what I can to protect our poultry farmers."

In June, Gov. Tom Ridge signed a bill providing \$5 million to poultry producers affected by the outbreak. The money is being used to reimburse owners for one-third the value of destroyed flocks, for the cost of cleaning and sanitizing the poultry houses, and for other preventative and control measures.

Hayes said the history of the virus indicates the greatest influenza risk to poultry may come with cooler weather, and he urged continued attention to strict biosecurity within the industry.

"Immediate discovery is an important key to minimizing the spread of the virus. We ask all producers to continue to participate in biosecurity surveillance by the department and have any unusual respiratory disorders diagnosed by a laboratory," Hayes said.

In July, Hayes canceled poultry exhibits at county and community fairs in nine southeastern counties. This ban is in effect for the remainder of 1997.

The current outbreak of H7N2 began in Lebanon County in December. Since then, 16 flocks were diagnosed with the virus, affecting about 1.75 million laying chickens. Nearly one million of them were destroyed in an effort to halt the spread of the disease.

A quarantine imposed on a 75-square mile area of northwestern Lancaster County in May remains in effect.

Hayes asked producers to continue to keep poultry houses locked, allowing only essential personnel into houses. Workers should wear clean or disposable coveralls, head cover and plastic boots which can be discarded or boots which can be thoroughly washed and disinfected. A disinfectant footbath should be used and changed daily.

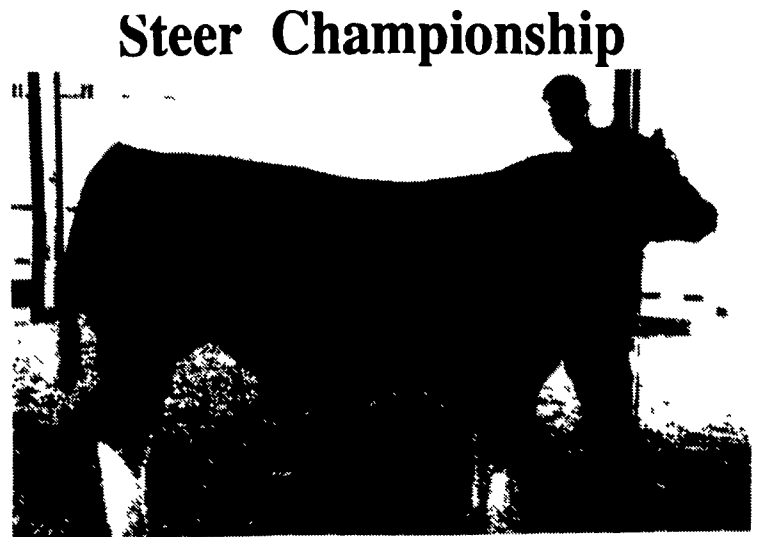
Movements of all vehicles should be restricted, and vehicles should be disinfected. All supplies brought to farms should be either new, or clean, washed, and disinfected.

Hayes commended the poultry industry for their diligence in containing the virus, but noted the

cooperative efforts must continue.

"We must continue to work together to reduce the threat of a resurgence of the influenza. I am not ready to declare victory just because we have had a string of virus-free weeks. We must stand guard," Hayes said.

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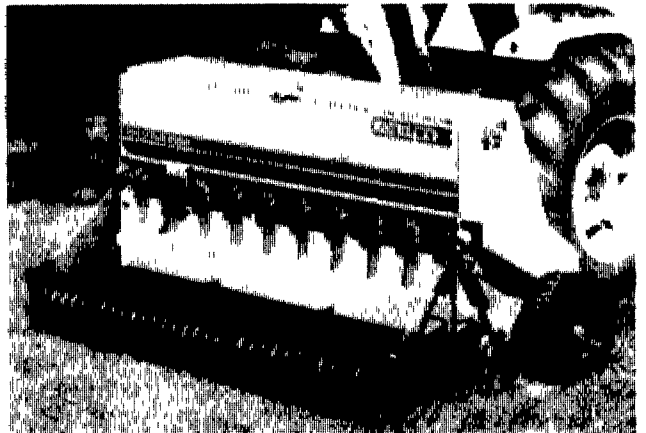
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