

Avian Health Symposium Landmark Event

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UNION DEPOSIT (Dauphin Co.) — The first Pennsylvania avian health symposium, held Thursday at the Sheraton East Harrisburg, was hailed as a landmark event for all segments of the multifaceted avian industry.

The entire "avian" industry was considered — not just the "poultry" industry.

Whereas the definition of poultry, and its practical use, limits it to the scope of domestic birds raised for meat or eggs, there are many other people raising and selling birds for many other reasons, and they must be included in concerns about avian health.

Almost all segments of the entire world of Pennsylvania's broad avian agriculture community were represented in some manner.

Either through a direct spokesperson, or some other form, representation at the symposium included that for the small family operation and the large production integrators raising and marketing broilers, or layers for eggs; the producers of various specific breeds and fowl for the live bird markets, and the backyard breeder of fancy fowl; as well as the small and large producers of waterfowl, game birds and exotic fowl.

After the day-long symposium, the general consensus seemed to be that the symposium has been long desired and needed, as the entire industry faces the hard fact that biosecurity and disease control must be considerations for the entire industry, not just the high

production commercial segment.

Several speakers alluded to two widely held, though not necessarily accurate, perceptions within the poultry industry that have caused some polarity:

- That it's mostly non-mainstream commercial breeders and dealers, especially those who supply the live-bird markets, who are posing the greatest danger and an unacceptable risk in spreading disease, such as avian influenza.

- That the megaproduction confinement facility industry — with its particular emphases in breeding goals, and production techniques — is responsible for creating or enhancing dangerous diseases.

It was also expressed that the different types of producers have become "enemies."

By the end of the symposium, it became apparent that the entire avian industry (including those not present, such as those who deal with wildlife) must come together and become complementary, if not cohesive, forces in order to battle disease and its spread.

While there were several who expressed a desire to return to a time when it was easy to have fun with unfettered backyard poultry hobbies or sideline businesses, it also became very apparent that because of the way the Pennsylvania agribusiness and residential community has developed, that some of those niceties have had to be sacrificed, at least for now.

In broader scope, the symposium was precipitated by the fact that the human population is becoming greater and living in closer proximity to an ever-

increasing population of domestic animals; that domestic poultry is generally grouped together in large numbers in confinement housing; that the locations of the poultry houses are closer together, and the overall population of domestic poultry has increased dramatically; that transportation abilities can move diseases via animals or contaminated materials much faster than government measures can detect and react to stop its spread; and that man's knowledge of diseases, especially viruses, is slight, though growing.

This has been discussed among state scientific and agricultural leaders for some time and is a major part of the reason that the state Legislature and the past two administrations recognized the importance of upgrading the state's diagnostic laboratory system to the degree of regaining accreditation.

Not only was accreditation and upgrading and modernizing facilities necessary to perform testing to help with fulfilling health requirements for selling and transporting livestock, but the tripartite Pennsylvania Animal Diagnostic Laboratory System (PADLS) was created, under the oversight of Dr. Cy Card, now retired, in order to quickly detect and respond to and control animal diseases.

The PADLS system uses the diagnostic and research capabilities of Penn State University, University of Pennsylvania and the state Department of Agriculture.

This was, and is, seen as necessary to protect not just the multi-billion dollar poultry industry, but the health of all of Pennsylvania's agricultural livestock, domestic animals, wild life, and most importantly, humans.

While the symposium was held to address the wide world of avian health, it can be assumed that attendance was spurred because there were several avian influenza and poultry disease events, believed to be related, that have occurred within the live bird market, as well as within the meat and egg commercial poultry industry.

There have been several outbreaks of avian influenza over the past year and more, in the south central region of the state. The outbreaks occurred in some commercial flocks as well as a dealer for the live bird market.

The avian influenza is prevalent in the New York and New Jersey live bird markets, and new regulations have been issued by the state of New York (effective Jan. 2) that have apparently created a blockade between Pennsylvania producers for the live bird market and the markets.

Further, the state Legislature approved the allocation of \$5 mil-

lion last year to be used by the state Department of Agriculture to help reduce the financial losses for farmers whose flock(s) had been destroyed either voluntarily or involuntarily because of positive tests for a nonpathogenic variety of the H2N7 strain of avian influenza.

The Legislature included the instruction that some research be done, and that the department report back on the situation. The proceedings of the symposium, scheduled to be prepared for the Legislature by the end of March, is to serve as that report.

Then, the findings of the symposium will be widely disseminated, according to state Deputy Secretary of Agriculture for Administration Zoann Parker, who coordinated and moderated the symposium.

Further, the state Senate adopted a resolution that called for the PDA to report back on the effectiveness of biosecurity measures, as well as to research ways to make the industry less dependent upon emergency state funds to shore it up in times of disease outbreaks.

The scope of the symposium touched upon each aspect.

However, by the end, the consensus was that several immediate actions have to be taken.

The Department of Agriculture must request that New York state relax some of its live-bird regulations, especially the requirement to have a veterinarian draw blood upon, test, inspect and certify the health of a flock of birds intended for market, within 10 days of being sent to market.

That is a virtual impossibility, not only in terms of the additional cost of having a vet do farm visits to pull blood, etc., but also because there are so few veterinarians trained adequately to treat birds, much less be able to recognize and identify the various poultry specific diseases.

All poultry producers should keep accurate records and adopt strictly followed biosecurity measures.

Some of those biosecurity mea-

asures include:

- Do not allow anyone to enter the farm, much less a poultry house, without some inspection of their vehicle and person.

- Do not allow a live-bird hauler to enter the farm lane. It was recommended that any hauler be required to park at the end of the farm lane, that the truck be inspected for dirt and manure. A suspicious vehicle or one with some manure or dirt should be sent on its way.

- Thoroughly clean and disinfect crates used to transport birds.

- Use only the farm crew, wearing "clean" (in terms of no organic residues from other sources) clothes, to load birds into crates, and then haul them to the end of the lane.

- Do one flock at a time. Do not introduce birds into a flock.

The symposium provided a great more information, for consideration by those in the poultry industry and those not directly involved, such as consumers.

For example, it was stated that, worldwide, science is still at a loss to explain from where avian influenza comes.

Science can not yet answer where and how the disease gets its start, or how it changes from a disease that causes sickness and some minor death in chickens to causing large losses, much less quickly identify and test for it.

For practical use, they did say that it appears to remain mostly active in manure, and in the birds. Maintaining control of those, and preventing contamination of fields, vehicles, and clothes, and taking precautions to not be careless in any aspect of control is urged.

Rodent control and wild bird control is also strongly urged.

There are many questions about all aspects of avian health, that leaders and officials said may never all be answered, but for the first time, the entire industry has gotten a step in the right direction to deal with the issues.

(Continued next week.)

Lebanon County Plans Dairy Day Event

NORTH CORNWALL (Lebanon Co.) — Lebanon County Extension dairy and livestock agent Galen Kopp has announced some details for a Feb. 25 dairy day event scheduled to be held from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. at the Myerstown Church of the Brethren.

The cost of the event is \$5, which buys a lunch ticket. Deadline for ticket purchases is Feb. 11. Mail a check, payable to the "Extension Special Fund," to: Galen Kopp, Lebanon County Extension Office, 2120 Cornwill road, Suite 1, Lebanon PA 17042.

The lunch tickets will not be mailed, they are to be picked up at the event during registration.

The annual dairy day event is to begin with registration, coffee and donuts and time to visit commercial exhibits from 9 a.m. to 9:30 a.m.

Introductions are to be made from 9:30 a.m. to 9:45 a.m., followed by the first speaker, family counselor and motivational speaker, Jerry Shenk, who is to speak on, "Seeing through change."

From 10:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m., Dr. James Ferguson, a researcher with the University of Pennsylvania School of Veterinary Medicine New Bolton Center, is to discuss

testing for milk urea nitrogen, and its applicability as an indicator of feeding efficiency in a dairy herd, as well as potentially providing some indication of animal health, and ultimately as a tool to help farm profitability.

From 11:30 a.m. to 11:45 a.m., Jennifer Hershey, county executive director of the USDA Farm Service Agency, is to provide an update on programs and changes through the agency; while Charles Wertz, director of the Lebanon County Conservation District, is to also provide a quick update on activities, opportunities and concerns of the county district.

After lunch, from noon through 1:15 p.m., Dan McFarland, multi-county agricultural engineer with an office in York County, is to discuss heifer and dry cow management from 1:15 p.m. until 2 p.m.

From 2 p.m. to 2:20 p.m., Del Voight, county agronomy agent, is to discuss the use of 15-inch narrow corn rows.

Kopp is scheduled to talk about forage management and custom harvesting from 2:20 p.m. to 2:45 p.m., followed by a question and answer session.

For more information, contact Kopp at (717) 270-4391.

1 FARM EQUIPMENT

Calumet 2250 Gal Liquid Spreader	\$4,000
Houle Manure Pump 10' Vertical	
2 Yrs. Old	\$5,000
Jamesway Barn Cleaner, Super 300, 2 Yrs. Old,	
235' of Hook & Eye Chain	\$4,500
Badger Silo Unloaders, 20', 1-pack drive, 1-Ring Drive	
50 Loop Free Stall	\$20 each
7 Calf Hutches	\$150 each
Westfaha, Codatron Computer Feeder, 3-Stalls,	
60 Collars	
250 Ton Alfalfa Haylage	
Cornell Bunk Feeder, Chain Type, 240'	
Union County, (717) 524-9754	



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