

Avian Health Symposium Reveals Need For Cooperation

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ties granted to the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture through the Domestic Animal Law to battle disease.

Also, the Rev. Ronald Romig, a well-known and widely recognized fancy bird and backyard grower, promoter and auctioneer for the live bird market, discussed the value, growth and projected growth of that market.

He said that it promises perhaps the greatest growth opportunity in the poultry business, and it shouldn't be shunned by the larger commercial industry.

The impetus for the symposium came from the state Legislature, when it provided for \$5 million to help with eradication and control of the most recent outbreak of avian influenza.

In the early 1980s, the federal government spent more than \$60 million to eradicate a highly pathogenic variety of avian influenza virus.

While the most recent variety is considered "non-pathogenic," or non-deadly, according to experts and officials (speaking from the podium and the floor during the symposium), it's a mistake to

interpret the word "non-pathogenic" to mean that it doesn't kill birds.

Mortality does increase, as does morbidity (the display of illness).

To ensure that it wasn't merely performing a temporary bailout for commercial poultry producers with the \$5 million allocation, the Legislature tacked on some additional requirements.

In addition to doing more research, the PDA was to assess the situation and report back to the Legislature.

State Deputy Secretary of Agriculture for Administration Dr. Zoann Parker said this week that the Legislature will receive its report on the symposium in early March.

To provide the Legislature with the report that it and the poultry industry needs, five committees were formed. Their reports basically formed the presentations during the symposium.

The five committees addressed legal issues, the live bird market, research, insurance, and risk reduction.

The committees are not going to disappear now that the symposium has been held, according to Parker.

Plans are for the committees to continue to meet and to help develop regulations and guidelines for biosecurity, marketing and protocol for the next outbreak of avian influenza.

(Chances are that some form of avian influenza will break out again, since it is worldwide and found widely in migratory waterfowl and other wildfowl.)

While the title of the symposium was avian health, it dealt primarily with avian influenza, though there are other diseases of concern in the poultry industry, such as New Castle's Disease.

Given the uncertainty of disease outbreak, it can be assumed that avian influenza is not, nor will it be, the only disease of concern by the poultry industry.

It is, however, for now the disease of most concern.

Until the source of it can be discovered, and potentially eliminated, it can be assumed that forms of the virus will continue to threaten the poultry industry and potentially human health.

As far as the use of a vaccine to maintain bird health in the presence of the H7N2 avian influenza associated with the most recent

outbreaks in Pennsylvania, the consensus of the poultry industry was that they would rather not use a vaccine.

There are at least two important reasons for not using a vaccine — foreign markets could and some would ban vaccinated birds from entering, thus jeopardizing a significant portion of the market for Pennsylvania birds; it would add to the regular cost of production and put producers at an economic disadvantage.

However, vaccines have been shown to be effective in stopping the spread of the disease, according to one expert who reported on what Mexico had done to battle a pathogenic strain there.

It was also reported that the recent human deaths attributable to a Hong Kong version of avian influenza, and the whole destruction of poultry there, are evidence of the seriousness that world leaders are taking concerning the disease.

As an aside, a symposium expert said the Hong Kong avian influenza represents the first known time that the disease has been transferred from bird to man. However, the expert said the national Centers for Disease Control (the U.S. Public Health Service's agencies for the control of infectious and preventable diseases) still has insufficient data to establish that a direct bird-to-man route was the pathway for infection.

As far as the use of vaccine in battling avian influenza, there is a fairly large cache of vaccine specific for the H2N7 influenza found in Lebanon and Lancaster counties over the past year or so. It was developed at the request of the state, and is being held by the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

It is not to be used unless the disease changes into a deadly form.

As many medical and health

officials and others have been finding, the old saying, "What doesn't kill you makes you stronger," can very much apply to many diseases or pests.

Viruses, one of the less understood communicable diseases, constitute a large group of organisms that can affect plants and animals.

In any case, it has been shown repeatedly that nonjudicious use of a biocides can create resistant forms that become almost unstoppable or more dangerous.

Modern uses of fungicides, insecticides and herbicides have shown that resistance can develop from repeated and heavy applications.

Similarly, because of mutations, viruses can become resistant or develop into new varieties, or appear the same but exhibit deadlier effects, if treated primarily with a single approach.

The general strategy in preventing resistance developing in any disease or pest is to combine the use of physical barriers, chronological barriers, and life cycle interruptions, with the judicious use of chemical or biological controls.

In the plant industry it has been called Integrated Pest Management (IPM).

For the poultry industry, the apparent "IPM" strategy in the fight against avian influenza is for strict biosecurity measures to be planned and used, and to be reviewed regularly for thoroughness.

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

They should also understand that the virus is microscopic, and can be carried on microscopic materials, mainly organic.

For practical use, they did say that it appears to remain mostly active in manure, and in the birds. Maintaining control of those two physical things by preventing contamination of fields, vehicles, and clothes, and taking precautions to

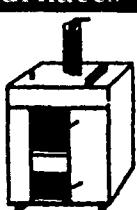
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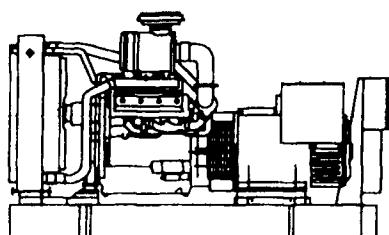
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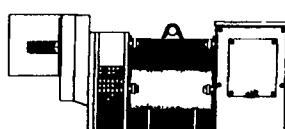


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