

Avian Health Symposium

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not be careless in any aspect of control, is urged.

Disciplined rodent control and wild bird control is also strongly urged, not only to thwart the introduction of avian influenza, but to prevent a variety of diseases from infecting a flock.

David Henzler, DVM, the epidemiology program manager for the PDA Bureau of Animal Health and Diagnostic Services, talked about some of the live bird market issues, as did Rev. Romig.

Romig noted the diversity of the audience present and appealed to the larger sector of the poultry industry to, more or less, not thumb their noses at the exhibition breeders and the purebred breeders, as well as those who produce strictly for the live bird market.

Pennsylvania's exhibition breeders, he said, have long been nationally recognized among their circles for being "quality people," as well as for producing superior quality birds and practicing proper breeding and raising techniques.

For exhibition purposes, health testing has been performed for years. And as far as record keeping, Romig said that exhibition breeders may well have better

documentation of their flocks than most commercial operations.

Some of the flocks are generations old, and some represent important vestiges of poultry genetics that otherwise would threaten the extinction of the particular breed.

He said that these people do not want disease to affect their birds, suggesting that such bird enthusiasts probably place more value on their birds than do commercial breeders. Many of these long-time exhibitor and purebred breeders have invested their own money, time and effort in maintaining a breed of poultry that may no longer have wide commercial appeal, but may well out-value any commercial breed in terms of sentiment and human interest.

He said the people he represents also includes those with "backyard" flocks.

For an exhibition breeder, those birds not intended for continuing a breeding program are frequently marketed at live bird markets, such as in Lancaster or Belleville, in addition to the other markets.

He said that those who focus on the New York/New Jersey live bird market, and consider it to be a market that could be sacrificed in

order to protect the larger commercial meat and egg market are not knowledgeable about other aspects of human uses of poultry.

Some people want live birds, instead of commercially slaughtered and prepared poultry, for consumption.

And though perhaps not fully appreciated or well understood by the majority of people living in central and southcentral Pennsylvania, there are some religious uses of live birds (not Satanic) that practitioners will continue, whether or not Pennsylvania as a state, or the industry as a whole, condones it.

Romig said that for the majority industry to attempt to squash the live bird markets as an avian influenza preventative is shortsighted.

He said that doing so would only force the live bird market underground and take away the ability of government to work with that business sector in controlling the spread of disease.

Furthermore, Romig said, "The live bird market and dealers are developing by leaps and bounds in other cities (other than New York).

"I challenge you to think of it as an asset," he said. He said at stake

is more than someone with a couple of birds in the backyard — there are auction and trading businesses that are nationally recognized; 4-H and FFA youth programs; county fairs; the state's five large poultry shows; and the specialty breeders.

He said the larger industry must consider the impact of state regulation upon those with large fowl and bantams, guinea fowl and pigeons, ducks, rheas, emus, chukar, pheasants, etc.

Further, he said that with the growing ethnic demand driving the live bird markets that the industry should be provided support instead of disdain. Economically, he said, "If handled properly, (activity in the live bird market) could increase 200 to 300 percent over the next five years.

"Markets are there, suppliers are there, and many are recording and using biosecurity measures."

What the industry needs is to be included in the information flow, and not be treated like an unwanted child.

He said, "When we have the respect and cooperation of each other, then we can have the respect and cooperation of others."

Romig presented a list of nine

issues that he said he would like to see developed.

He said he would like to have all people involved in the poultry industry to be included in the process of initiating biosecurity.

Romig also asked that better a communications system be developed between state officials and those he represents. He said that in 1993, when temporary regulations and a quarantine were placed on the Farm Show, the quarantine was lifted in February, but he only found out in April.

He said he represents about 25,000 people, and he said, "They will cooperative if they know what's going on."







He also asked that state officials work to develop better cooperation with non-mainstream breeders and poultry raisers. "We do not live in a police state with threats over our heads," he said, attempting to remind officials that stereotyping any segment of any population can lead to insensitive and even callous decisions and behavior on the part of rule makers and enforcers.

Another request he made was that officials continue to support and extend that support to all who may have an outbreak in their flock. "They are not asking for an outbreak on their property."

Romig said that an efforts should be taken to increase the

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