

Human Response To Cholesterol: It's Up To The Individual

ANDY ANDREWS
Lancaster Farming Staff
MANHEIM (Lancaster Co.) — Dr. Robert G. Elkin, newly appointed head of the Penn State Poultry Science Department, believes there is a genetic basis as to why some people can eat many eggs regularly and suffer no ill effects.

It's in the genes. He related the story reported in the March 28, 1991 New England Journal of Medicine about the "Egg Man" — a male in his 80s who consumed 25 eggs a day — a day! — for 15 years in a row. Normal people, according to

Elkin, absorb between 29 percent and 80 percent of the cholesterol, mainly located in the egg yolk, into their bodies (most average about 56 percent). The 88-year-old man simply "shunted" the cholesterol through bile acids in his body, out his stools. The man was clinically recorded as absorbing only 18 percent of the cholesterol — way below the average.

There are no easy answers to explain why this happened, Elkin told almost two dozen poultry producers and agri-industry representatives Monday afternoon at the Penn State-sponsored Poultry Science and Health Seminar at Kreider's

Restaurant, Manheim. Elkin believes it's a combination of factors, mostly involving human genetics, which will pave the way for further understanding.

Elkin, an expert in cholesterol and nutrient metabolism, spoke about his role as new poultry science department head, a position he accepted in July in the wake of the resignation of William Weaver, former head.

Elkin, a native of Nutley, N.J., is a Penn State alumnus, having been graduated with a bachelor's in animal science in 1975. He received a master's in poultry nutrition from Purdue in 1977 and a doctorate

from the same university, in nutritional biochemistry, in 1981.

Elkin has been a faculty member of the Purdue Department of Animal Sciences until now.

Elkin spoke about the work he has done in studying cholesterol in eggs.

Elkin cautioned that, contrary to what sometimes is reported by the media, Americans in general can handle dietary cholesterol — most of them, anyway. However, there is a select percent — about 20 percent of the population — that may increase their serum cholesterol level, sometimes significantly, when eating eggs, which could prove dangerous to their health.

Unfortunately, there is no other way to test whether a person responds or not unless they submit to a clinical test. "The cholesterol test is highly individualized," Elkin said. "There's no way we can quickly tell whether you'd be a responder or not."

The egg yolk, where the cholesterol resides, includes "two hepatically synthesized lipoproteins that comprise about 84 percent of the yolk dry matter," Elkin noted. Those proteins include very low-density lipoprotein (VLDL), about 60 percent, which makes up the source of virtually all yolk cholesterol, and vitellogenin (about 24

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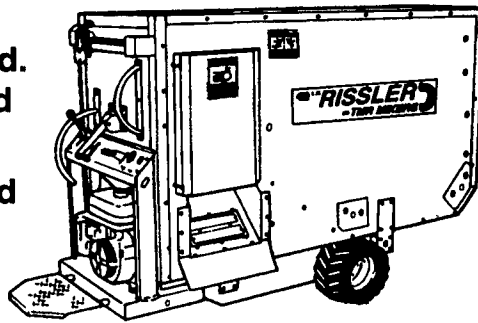
Dr. Robert G. Elkin, newly appointed head of the Penn State Poultry Science Department, second from right, spoke to about two dozen poultry producers and agri-industry representatives Monday afternoon at the Penn State-sponsored Poultry Science and Health Seminar at Kreider's Restaurant, Manheim. From left, Mike Hulet, Penn State poultry science professor; Paul Patterson, Penn State poultry science professor; Elkin; and John Schwartz, Lancaster extension director.



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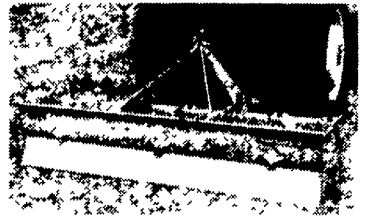
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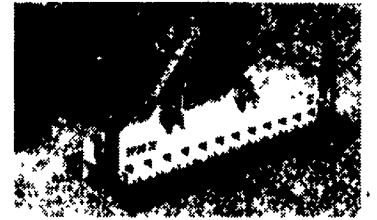
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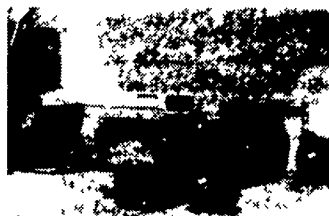
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