

Poultry Industry On The Alert For Exotic Newcastle Disease

Local Meeting Addresses END

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MANHEIM (Lancaster Co.) — The hot news in the poultry industry today is the outbreak of Exotic Newcastle Disease (END) in California and now Nevada and Arizona.

More than 30 poultry industry representatives gathered at Kreider's restaurant in Manheim to hear an update from Dr. David Kradel, DVM, adviser to PennAg Industries Association and Penn State, and Jim Shirk, PennAg.

Newcastle viruses, explained Kradel, differ in disease-producing abilities. The three strains include low to high pathogenicity. The low pathogenicity Lentogenic strain, for example, used for vaccines, is endemic to the U.S. and essentially all commercial flocks are vaccinated multiple times for the disease. The highly pathogenic strains of the Newcastle viruses cause Exotic Newcastle Disease.

The virus, said Kradel, is spread by infected birds, people, equipment, and air. It can survive for weeks in a warm, moist environment and indefinitely in frozen materials, however can be killed by disinfectants, heat, dryness, and sunlight.

All avian species can be infected, however waterfowl are less susceptible. In fact some species, such as parrots and waterfowl, can be carriers and shedding the disease but not showing any signs, said Kradel.

Birds may exhibit symptoms such as sneezing, coughing, gasping, and nasal discharge, besides a watery, greenish diarrhea. Other, external signs may be the swelling of combs, wattles, eyelids, and head.

Nervous signs may be depression, tremors, twisted head or neck, paralysis, or sudden death. Hens may produce eggs with a moderate to marked decrease and with thin shells.

The disease can be confused with highly pathogenic avian influenza, fowl cholera, laryngotracheitis, fowl pox, and Coryza, according to Kradel.

Poultry farms may experience up to 100 percent mortality in unvaccinated flocks and 10-20 percent mortality in vaccinated flocks. It does not, however, pose a threat to public health and doesn't affect the safety of poultry and egg products.

To prevent the virus, avoid contact with game fowl, recently acquired parrots, and migrating waterfowl, suggested Kradel. "By not looking at milder cases of the disease, we could conceivably miss this for a period of time,"



From left, Dr. Dave Kradel, DVM, and Jim Shirk, PennAg Industries Association, spoke about Exotic Newcastle Disease at a recent meeting. They are joined by Greg Martin, poultry extension agent.

he said.

From 1973 until now, END was introduced through pet birds each year (except for two years), however was picked up before it spread to commercial flocks. California's most recent outbreak began in game fowl flocks. The discussion in that state, said Kradel, is whether the virus should be contained by vaccinating birds or by massive depopulation.

Six commercial flocks were infected and are now depopulated in California, said Shirk. Besides commercial flocks, backyard flocks have also been depopulated.

The owners of the birds have been compensated fair market value from the USDA. More than 1,500 officials are working on eradication, and more than 9,000 premises have been quarantined, he said.

Shirk gave an update on the situation after speaking to Bill Mattos, California Poultry Federations Executive Director. According to Shirk, Mattos said, "as an industry, we still feel things are moving too slowly." Mattos is hoping to see a shut-

down of all live bird markets, besides the introduction of laws requiring permits for anyone hauling poultry.

"We do feel that the USDA and California Ag Departments are cooperating well, and their efforts are essential to stamping this out," said Mattos, however "we just get a bit frustrated by how slow decisions are sometimes made."

Although everything is being done to keep any birds from moving out of the state, said Mattos, he wonders how many fighting cocks are moving underground throughout the country.

Pennsylvania should be careful of underground poultry movement out of California, since the state "had a lot of (game) birds that they can't account for that may have traveled east," he said.

"The main things is that we want to keep our biosecurity eyes open. It could be something really minor — such as a minor drop in egg production — but its important to get it checked,"

Shirk said.

END Affects Trade with 34 Countries

Nearly two million birds have been destroyed in California and Nevada, where a task force comprised of more than 1,600 federal and state animal health employees is working to stop an outbreak of Exotic Newcastle Disease (END) that has infected or exposed six commercial poultry operations and nearly 1,700 non-commercial or 'backyard' flocks.

The END eradication effort, which has been ongoing since October 2002, was dealt a setback Wednesday, Feb. 5, when Arizona Department of Agriculture officials announced END had spread to a small flock of backyard birds on the Colorado River Indian Tribe's reservation in western Arizona.

A highly contagious foreign viral disease, END affects only poultry and most species of birds, but it does not pose a health threat to humans, food or other animals.

Dr. James Lenarduzzi, acting executive director for the Texas Animal Health Commission, the state's regulatory agency for livestock and poultry health, stated, "Commercial flock movement has been stopped from the affected areas."

"However, many people with a large yard or country acreage own a few chickens for laying eggs, or for the enjoyment of having ducks, geese or other bird species as yard pets. Students often choose to raise poultry for

their 4-H or agricultural science class project"

Dr. Lenarduzzi, said there were concerns that END-exposed birds could be transported (into another state) by passenger vehicle, then be introduced into a small, noncommercial flock.

"We are urging owners to exercise extreme caution when purchasing or moving new birds into their flock. Buyers should always know where the birds originated, and health papers issued by a veterinarian should accompany the shipment," said Dr. Lenarduzzi.

"To keep END from spreading, everyone also must comply with the quarantine restrictions affecting birds, poultry and poultry products from southern California, southern Nevada and western Arizona."

Dr. Lenarduzzi explained that the impact of an END outbreak goes far beyond a state's borders. At least 34 countries, including Russia, Spain, Brazil, China, and Mexico have suspended the importation of poultry and poultry products from the states affected by the END outbreak.

Bird owners should report unexpected death losses, severe illness affecting the flock, or signs of disease in birds, including gasping, muscular tremors or paralysis to their state Department of Agriculture.

AQUA COUNTRY IS PART OF MARCH 8 GROWER & MARKETER

We introduce a brand-new component of the *Lancaster Farming Grower & Marketer* section for the March 8 issue. It's called *Aqua Country*. Pages are scheduled to include reports on farming fish, including a large hatchery in Franklin County; trout hatcheries in Monroe County; a research update on the industry from select universities; and a listing and advertising from major aquacultural suppliers. Watch for it!

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