



# Poultry Voice

Volume 3, Issue 3

October 2003

## Federal News

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### EPA proposes deal with livestock farms

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency is proposing to offer large livestock farms amnesty from lawsuits in exchange for participating in a study monitoring air pollution from feedlots and manure pools.

The plan, which has come under criticism from conservation groups, would ask large farms to pay \$3,000 and allow the EPA to monitor air pollution for about two years, officials say. After that time, farms would have to apply for emissions permits from local governments and would have to meet federal air quality standards.

The amnesty would cover only lawsuits by the federal government.

The waste generated by increasingly large farming operations releases nitrogen, methane, and other gases that combine to make ozone or smog. Also, thousands of Americans attribute respiratory illnesses, headaches, and heart problems to air pollution from such farms.



The EPA said the plan would bring large farms under the Clean Air Act. "It's bringing them into the system; it's exactly the opposite of letting them off the hook," Bob Kaplan, director of the EPA's division of special litigation and projects, told the *Los Angeles Times*.

But environmental groups said the proposal would allow large operations to continue flouting the Clean Air Act. "It lets polluters off the hook, sets no firm deadlines and contains no firm requirements for the livestock industry to clean up its pollution," Joe Rudek, senior scientist with conservation group Environmental Defense, told the *Times*.

Industry groups say the lack of standards and information about air pollution at farms means they don't know whether they are in compliance with the Clean Air Act (Meatingplace.com, 9/29/03).

### USDA allows importation of Canadian ruminant products

Agriculture Secretary Ann Veneman in August indicated that the United States would allow the importation of the following products from Canada: boneless sheep or goat meat from animals less than 12 months of age, boneless bovine meat from cattle less than 30 months of age, boneless veal meat from calves 36 weeks or younger, fresh or frozen cattle liver, nonruminant veterinary vaccines, pet products and feed ingredients from non-ruminant sources, and hunter-harvested, wild ruminants for personal use. Veneman indicated that in addition to the established safeguards already in place, experts had determined that the risk to public health from BSE from the above-mentioned products was low (Meat&Poultry, September 2003).

### USDA lifts quarantine for END in California

On Sept. 16, 2003, Agriculture Secretary Ann Veneman indicated the end of the spread of exotic Newcastle disease (END) by lifting restrictions in California. Eleven months after the outbreak of END in California, restrictions were raised on the movement of birds, poultry, and other articles from Kern, Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino, and Ventura counties. Secretary Veneman congratulated all industry, state, and federal officials who helped to eradicate the disease. With the restriction



lifted on these counties in California, currently no part of the country is under quarantine due to END. About \$188 million was spent to fight the outbreak in California, Arizona, New Mexico, Texas, and Nevada. USDA's Animal Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) still continues to caution bird owners to adhere to strict biosecurity measures and to report sick birds to local authorities (USDA Release No. 0321.03).

## **FSIS focuses on meat and poultry distribution**

The Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) of the USDA issued the *Safety and Security Guidelines for the Transportation and Distribution of Meat, Poultry and Egg Products* in August. This is to help transporters and distributors of meat and poultry products tighten their food safety and security plans for their perishable products. The guidelines address points in transportation and distribution that may be vulnerable to intentional contamination and adulteration. They also encourage distributors to make sure products and packages are tamper-proof, and to have contingency plans in case of tampering and/or contamination. The guidelines may be accessed at <http://www.fsis.usda.gov/oa/topica/transportguide.pdf> (Meat&Poultry, September 2003).

## **FSIS proposes to revise classes of poultry**

The Agriculture Department's Food Safety and Inspection Service is proposing to amend the official poultry class standards of identity to more accurately describe poultry sold in the marketplace. FSIS uses poultry class standards to ensure that poultry products are labeled in a truthful and non-misleading manner.

After examining current poultry production methods and poultry class standards of identity, FSIS has determined that the existing standards are outdated and too broad to accurately represent poultry being produced today, according to an FSIS news release. According to the release, advancements in breeding and husbandry have generally shortened the period

required for birds to attain market-ready weights. For example, 30 years ago, it took 12 to 13 weeks to produce birds with the physical characteristics of broilers, which are now being produced in as little as six to eight weeks. The proposed classifications would more clearly describe the age and breeding of poultry classes and enhance FSIS's ability to enforce labeling claims.

The proposed rule is available in the latest *Federal Register* and online at [USDA.gov](http://www.usda.gov) (Meatingplace.com, 10/1/03).

## **USDA measures emissions from poultry and livestock**

In an attempt to gather relevant data to help regulate emissions from livestock and poultry farms, the USDA is working with researchers from universities in six states. Using mobile labs, agricultural engineers (from the universities of Illinois, Minnesota, North Carolina State, Iowa State, and Texas A&M) are measuring levels of dust, gas, and odor in buildings, and the flow rates of fans inside the buildings, in order to get a handle on the amount of dust, odor, and gases emitted from the buildings. The researchers will note differences due to species, seasons, geographic region, age of animals, and building design and management. Data will be collected for a total of 15 months (Watt PoultryUSA, 7/21/03).



The West Virginia Poultry Association is inviting people to join for 2004. Dues are \$20 annually. Anyone interested in becoming a member of the Association should contact the WVPA office at P.O. Box 612, Morgantown, WV 26836; Telephone, 304-538-2725 or 538-6688



## National News

### **State aid available to Virginia poultry farms to cover AI losses**

Poultry farmers who lost flocks during last year's avian influenza outbreak were eligible for aid from the state, according to the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services.

The legislature appropriated about \$1.5 million to compensate farmers, and the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services developed a process to identify eligible farmers and compute their losses.

The program will pay a percentage of income lost because of downtime while farms were under quarantine. The program will also cover losses caused by flocks being marketed early, the loss of egg-laying flocks, and the destruction of eggs laid by infected birds.

"The amount each farmer receives will depend on how many apply," department spokesperson Elaine Lidholm said. "If everyone who's eligible applies, they'll see about 25 to 27 cents on the dollar" (Meatingplace.com, 8/14/03).



### **Air-chilled poultry operation to expand**

Tecumseh, Neb.-based MBA Poultry, which produces and markets air-chilled chickens, will build an addition to its current plant and expand its products into restaurants, said Mark Haskins, founder, president, and CEO.

Currently, the company sells chickens to grocery stores, but it is working to expand its product into restaurants.

"It's an ongoing process," Haskins told The Meatingplace.com. "We are now in several restaurants around the area and will continue to expand."

MBA also added a line of organic chicken in September. "This is a continuation of the evolution of our niche product," Haskins said.

To make way for increased restaurant sales and expanded operations, the company is building a 2,500-square-foot addition to its current 90,000-square-foot plant in Tecumseh, which will house a new overwrap machine used to create supermarket tray packaging and a machine that weighs chicken for requests by restaurants.

The addition is scheduled for completion in early 2004.

Haskins said MBA Poultry is the only commercial poultry company in the United States using air-chill technology, which is more commonly found in Canada and Europe. Haskins said he came across the technology on a visit to the Czech Republic in 1994 and brought the idea back to the United States when he founded the company in 1998.

Instead of immersing chickens in cold water during post-evisceration to bring down their temperatures, MBA uses purified cold air to bring temperatures down, meaning the chickens have up to 10 percent less water and taste fresher, Haskins said (Meatingplace.com, 8/25/03).

### **Patent issued for online fecal detection system**

USDA/Agricultural Research Service (ARS) scientists from the Poultry Processing and Microbial Quality Unit at the Russell Research Center in Athens, Ga. have been awarded a patent for a hyperspectral imaging system that scans the surface of poultry carcasses for contaminants. This imaging system was developed in conjunction with other ARS scientists, the University of Georgia, and the ProVision Technologies Division of the Institute of Technology Development. Though it was tested with a prototype at 140 birds per minute, it can be used at 180 birds per minute. The system can also be used with meat carcasses (Watt PoultryUSA, 9/15/03).



### **Pilgrim's Pride acquires ConAgra chicken division**

In June, Pilgrim's Pride acquired ConAgra's chicken operations, making Pilgrim's Pride the second largest chicken company (behind Tyson Foods); it has annual net sales of about \$5 billion. Brand name products acquired under this sale include Pierce, Country Pride, EasyEntree, and To-Ricos. ConAgra will make Pilgrim's Pride its preferred supplier of chicken for five years. The deal also gives Pilgrim's Pride nationwide distribution of fresh and processed chicken products, as well as additional cooking facilities. ConAgra's Butterball, Banquet, and Healthy Choice brands were not included in the deal (Watt PoultryUSA, July 2003).

### **McDonald's prohibits antibiotic use**

McDonald's Corp., Oakbrook, Ill., has ordered its meat suppliers to stop the routine use of antibiotics as growth promoters in their animals. The company indicates that this policy is not directed against the use of antibiotics to treat sick animals. McDonald's consulted with environmentalists and science and consumer groups. The company indicates that direct suppliers (who provide 70% of its poultry meat) will have to provide an annual self-certification showing that they are complying with the policy. Incentives will be offered for those who comply. The ban is to go into effect worldwide by late 2004 (Meat&Poultry, July 2003).

### **Co-permitting not allowed in Maryland**

The Maryland Department of the Environment, indicated in June that Maryland poultry companies will no longer be held accountable for litter handling practices of the growers who contract with them to raise chickens. The ruling affirmed a 2002 judge's decision that the department did not have the authority to create a co-permitting statute. Gov. R. L. Erlich, indicated, however, that Maryland poultry producers would still be required to deal with poultry waste in an environmentally friendly manner (Meat&Poultry, July, 2003).

### **Free biosecurity CD offered**

The U. S. Poultry & Egg Association has funded the development of a CD-ROM dealing with biosecurity training for the poultry industry. It was developed by Dr. J. P. Villaincourt (North Carolina State University), Mr. Gene Lambert (Paradigm Media, California), and poultry disease specialists. This CD-ROM was developed in direct response to the wave of poultry diseases that have broken out in the country in the past few years, and also as a precaution against intentionally introduced disease. The CD-ROM does not mean to indicate that following its guidelines will prevent natural or intentional diseases from breaking out, but following biosecurity guidelines will help to limit, contain, and control the disease when and if it does occur. Free copies may be ordered on the Website: [www.poultryegg.org](http://www.poultryegg.org) (Int. Food Hygiene, Vol. 14, No. 4, 2003).

## **International News**

### **Trade with the EU may resume**

The press secretary's office of the White House indicated in June that an agreement on procedural steps had been reached between the United States and the European Union about the resumption of poultry exports to the EU. It was indicated that there were some questions which needed to be resolved, and both sides were committed to doing that. Exports of poultry meat to the EU were cut off in 1997 (Watt PoultryUSA, 6/30/03).

### **United Nations targets use of antimicrobials in livestock**

The World Health Organization of the United Nations (WHO/UN), citing a program begun in Denmark in 1998, has indicated that it favors phasing out the use of antibiotic growth promoters in animal feed. A WHO panel of experts studied the Denmark program and indicated that banning the antimicrobials is possible. The report attributed the increase in number of resistant bacteria from livestock to the use of antimicrobials, and was concerned that such bacteria can then be transmitted to humans (Meatingplace.com, 8/15/03).



## International News



### **Russia Inspects U.S. processing facilities**

The Russian Ministry of Agriculture announced in July the results of the U.S. processing plant inspection tours conducted between April and June 2003. A total of 341 plants and cold storage facilities were inspected--172 gained unconditional approval to export to Russia, 93 got conditional approval pending correction of cited deficiencies, and 76 facilities were rejected. This brings the list of approved facilities to about 40% less than in previous years, though industry personnel do not believe it will affect the volume of poultry exported to Russia (Int. Egg and Poultry Rev. Vol. 6, No. 28, July 15, 2003).

### **United States finalizing Russian import quota agreements**

United States Trade Representative Chief Agriculture Negotiator Allen Johnson met with Russia's Deputy Minister for Economic Development and Trade, Maxim Medvedkov, recently in Japan to finalize an import quota agreement for poultry and red meat.

Johnson returned to the United States from Tokyo with an agreement that "substantially improves the United States' ability to meet Russian poultry needs and enhance marketing opportunities for the industry." "These efforts by Ambassadors Zoellick and Johnson should help assure that the United States will not only continue to be the primary supplier of poultry to Russia, but that Russia will also continue to be our No. 1 poultry export market," said Jim Sumner, president of the USA Poultry & Egg Export Council, in a news re-

lease. "We are most appreciative of the efforts of the Bush Administration to work tirelessly to resolve our industry's concerns and reach a favorable agreement. Together with the National Chicken Council, we're pleased to have such support from so many cabinet officials on this issue."

In other Russia-related news, the Agriculture Department's Food Safety and Inspection Service has postponed the Oct. 1 implementation date for having dedicated footwear in establishments exporting poultry products to Russia, according to the National Chicken Council. FSIS said it is suspending the enforcement of the footwear requirement until additional information about the requirement and its implementation is obtained

In an effort to resolve the issue, a USDA team is traveling to Moscow to begin talks (Meatingplace.com, 9/29/03).

### **Russian shoe concerns fluster U.S. chicken producers**

Industry opposition to a Russian demand that employees at U.S. chicken plants wear special scrubable shoes and leave them at work when they go home has prompted the United States to postpone implementation of new regulations for poultry trade between the two countries.

The new USDA regulations, designed to pacify Russian sanitary concerns about U.S. poultry plants, were slated to take effect Wednesday, Oct. 1, but that has been indefinitely postponed now because of the footwear dispute, according to USDA and U.S. industry officials.

A USDA negotiating team is in Russia this week and, according to one official, its goal is to convince Moscow to drop its special footwear requirement. Toby Moore, a spokesman for the U.S. Poultry and Egg Export Council, said "the expense of having to build locker facilities, for example, where employees could leave their boots" is too expensive for industry. He added that industry research shows such a regulation would provide no additional sanitary benefit (OsterDowJones Commodity News, 9/30/03).



## Upcoming Meetings

- Oct.
- 9-10 Poultry Protein and Fat Seminar, Peabody Hotel, Memphis, Tenn. U. S. Poultry & Egg Assoc. 770-493-9401; (F) 770-493-9257; [seminar@poultryegg.org](mailto:seminar@poultryegg.org)
  - 11-14 International Symposium on Animal, Agricultural and Food Processing Waste. (ISAAFPW); the 2<sup>nd</sup> International Swine Housing Conference; and the 3<sup>rd</sup> International Conference on Air Pollution from Agricultural Operations. Raleigh, N.C. 616-429-0300; (F) 616-429-3852; [hq@asae.org](mailto:hq@asae.org), [www.asae.org](http://www.asae.org)
  - 22-24 National Meeting on Poultry Health and Processing, Clarion Resort Fountainbleau Hotel, Ocean City, Md. Karen Adams, DPI, 302-856-9037; (F) 302-856-1845; [adams@dpichicken.com](mailto:adams@dpichicken.com)
  - 29-Nov. 1 AMI International Meat, Poultry and Seafood Industry Convention and Exposition, McCormick Place, Chicago, Ill. 703-841-2400; [convention@meatami.com](mailto:convention@meatami.com)

*Poultry Voice* is published quarterly to provide those interested in the poultry industry with pertinent production information from industry, academia, and federal and state governments to help ensure economic production of poultry in a manner that sustains the environment. *Poultry Voice* is sponsored by the West Virginia Extension Service.

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WVU Extension Service Poultry Web Site: [www.wvu.edu/~agexten/poultry/index.htm](http://www.wvu.edu/~agexten/poultry/index.htm)

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