

KDA, producers watch for Exotic Newcastle

By **ROGER SNELL**

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Kentucky Department of Agriculture officials in recent weeks have helped a national team of animal health specialists in California deal with a poultry disease known as Exotic Newcastle disease (END).

The disease was diagnosed in backyard poultry flocks in southern California last Oct. 1. Arizona and Nevada also have confirmed isolated cases. More than 3 million birds have been humanely destroyed in an attempt to eradicate the disease, the California Department of Food and Agriculture has reported.

Dr. Cris Young, a field veterinarian with the Kentucky Department of Agriculture, was among those assisting in California. Dr. Don Notter, the state veterinarian, and Dr. Ed Hall, KDA's director of homeland security, also have been directly involved in monitoring animal health concerns.

Young said the California team included retired and private veterinarians from Kentucky as well as KDA staff who assisted local, state and federal agencies.

"We are able to help another state while also gaining important field experience if we ever have a major animal health need ourselves," Young said.

Teamwork and vigilance are necessary to protect all animal health, said Harvey Mitchell, KDA's chief of staff.

"We have the important responsibility of detecting, preventing and eradicating animal diseases and have worked closely with all the major poultry producers in Kentucky," Mitchell said.

Kentucky's poultry industry has stringent internal standards to prevent disease, and it has cooperated and

shared information with KDA officials, Mitchell said.

Poultry is now the second-largest income-producing agricultural enterprise in the Commonwealth. Five of the largest poultry processors in Kentucky employ more than 6,000 people. More than 1,000 additional employees work at poultry farms.

Mitchell said KDA was scheduled to lead training exercises in April to show how many different agencies are needed to help in potential animal health disasters. "We've tried to prepare for these events before, but now there is much greater teamwork and positive coordination among agencies," Mitchell said.

KDA employees have distributed information about the California outbreak, in two languages, as provided by the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

"The public may not be aware of how extensive our role is," Mitchell said, noting that a recent national pigeon show in Louisville involved birds from 20 states that had to be monitored.

END affects all species of birds and is probably one of the most infectious poultry diseases in the world, according to the USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service. A death rate of almost 100 percent can occur in unvaccinated flocks, but Exotic Newcastle can infect and cause death even in vaccinated poultry, APHIS says.

Birds afflicted with END may exhibit clinical signs in the respiratory, digestive and nervous systems; partial to complete drop in egg production; production of thin-shelled eggs, and swelling of the tissues around the eyes and in the neck. Birds also may die of END

without showing any clinical signs.

END is spread primarily through direct contact between healthy birds and the bodily discharges of infected birds. The disease spreads rapidly among birds kept in confinement. Virus-bearing material can be picked up on shoes and clothing and carried from an infected flock to a healthy one. The virus can survive for several weeks in a warm and humid environment and can survive indefinitely in frozen material. It is destroyed rapidly by dehydration and the ultraviolet rays in sunlight.

The USDA says END is not a public health threat and does not affect the safety of poultry or eggs.

Exotic Newcastle turned up in the United States in the 1930s. In the early 1970s, nearly 12 million birds were destroyed to stem an outbreak in California.

It's almost West Nile season

With the return of warm weather, can mosquitoes be far behind? Mosquitoes carry West Nile Virus, which causes encephalitis (inflammation of the brain) in horses, humans, birds and other warm-blooded animals. West Nile was first detected in Kentucky in 2001; last year, 513 equine and 67 humans were diagnosed with the virus, and five of the human victims died.

Following are the Kentucky Department for Public Health's tips to reduce the risk of infection:

- Stay indoors at dawn, dusk and in the early evening when mosquitoes are most active.
- Wear long-sleeved shirts and long pants when you are outdoors.

Mitchell said KDA continues to spread the word to producers about the critical need to keep wild birds or rodents from getting into poultry feeding areas.

In other poultry health news, avian influenza was confirmed in mid-March in one chicken house of a Connecticut egg farm. State officials quarantined 4.7 million chickens as they investigated the possible outbreak. Japan lifted a temporary ban on all U.S. poultry imports but retained a ban on poultry imports from Connecticut.

KDA staff assisted during a similar avian influenza outbreak in Virginia in 2002, which led to humane eradication of 4.6 million birds.

No cases of either avian influenza or Exotic Newcastle have been reported in Kentucky.

Hustonville man honored

Special to KAN

J.L. Hoskins, Hustonville, Ky., owner of Branch View Angus, has received the American Angus Association's Historic Angus Herd Award for the longevity of his involvement in the registered Angus business.

"We're always pleased to honor our breeders who have invested decades of their life to raising registered Angus cattle," said John Crouch, executive vice president of the American Angus Association. "The dedication and commitment you find in recipients of the Historic Angus Herd Award is one of the reasons why the Angus breed is on top of the beef cattle business today."

Hoskins established the Branch View herd with the birth of an Angus heifer calf on the farm in 1933. The operation has expanded to include up to

150 registered Angus cows and the inclusion of two more generations of the Hoskins family.

Hoskins is a member of the Kentucky Angus Association, Central Kentucky Angus Association, Kentucky Cattlemen's Association and Lincoln County Cattlemen's Association. He is active in Farm Bureau, Ruritan Club and the Hustonville Baptist Church.

Hoskins owns and manages Branch View Angus Farm with his son-in-law, Donald S. Coffey, and grandson, James S. Coffey.

The Historic Angus Herd Award is presented to active members of the Association who own a herd that has been in the continuous production of registered Angus cattle for 50 years or more by the same person or members of the immediate family.

Leading the fight against hunger



Ted Sloan

Pam Sigler, right, talks about the group Three Chicks Fighting Hunger as Sue Weant, left facing camera, and Marian Blanchard look on during the Kentucky Women in Agriculture conference Feb. 28 in Lexington.