NEW TESTING REQUIREMENT FOR POULTRY AT FAIRS

Notice was recently received from the State Board of Animal Health on a new USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service testing requirement for Salmonella pullorum in poultry. This requirement included any bird(s) being exhibited or shown, such as those shown at county and state fairs, 4-H and FFA events. North Dakota poultry being shown or otherwise exhibited must have proof of originating from a National Poultry Improvement Plan (NPIP) tested flock or exhibition bird(s) need to have tested negative for pullorum by a certified testing agent.

Few diseases are more devastating to poultry producers than pullorum. First identified in 1899, the bacteria Salmonella pullorum causes heavy losses in chicks and pouls and decreases the productivity of adult birds. An infection that begins with a single bird can spread quickly through a flock, causing mortality as high as 80 percent or more. There is no treatment or specific vaccine for pullorum.

Pullorum disease is usually transmitted in the egg, from hen to offspring, but may also be spread through breathing or consuming contaminated dust, down, droppings or broken eggs; mating with an infected male; contaminated footwear, clothing and equipment; or unsanitary building environments, nesting areas and hatching or brooding equipment.

While chickens seem to be the most natural host for pullorum, the disease can also affect turkeys, ducks, geese, quail and other birds. Pullorum is rarely found in mammals and rarely passes from one mammal to another.

North Dakota has not had a case of Salmonella pullorum diagnosed in the state since the early 1970's but the state must become compliant with this testing due to federal regulations. Because of these regulations, certification on all birds will be required for entry at the Divide County Fair. The test used to identify the Salmonella pullorum bacteria requires a small blood sample, gathered from a wing of the birds and would need to be done prior to the fair.

Guidelines from the State Board of Animal Health in regards to certification of exhibition/show poultry are available at the Divide County Extension office. Basically, flocks which maintain birds for hatching purposes or keep birds for greater than 12 months have the option of either becoming an NPIP flock or testing exhibition birds within 90 days of the exhibition. The same applies to flocks which acquire birds from non NPIP sources or hatcheries, even if the birds are not kept year round. Flocks whose birds were acquired from NPIP sources and have all been at a location for less than 12 months and have no intentions of hatching eggs have an additional option, which is to complete a Poultry Exhibition Statement of Origin form, which needs to be signed by the approved hatchery or deal and flock owner or exhibitor. A copy of the Poultry Exhibition Statement of Origin can be found on this website under forms and can also be downloaded from the North Dakota Department of Agriculture website at http://www.nd.gov/ndda/program/national-poultry-improvement-plan.

Any birds brought in for entry at the Divide County Fair, whether 4-H, FFA or open class, will need to be accompanied by either a copy of the NPIP certificate for the flock, copies of test results from a certified testing agents if individual birds are tested for exhibition, or fully
completed Poultry Exhibition Statement of Origin. All birds or poultry will also need to be banded with an identification number that corresponds to their certification.

The National Poultry Improvement Plan Program (NPIP) was started in the 1930's as a cooperative industry, state and federal program to improve the quality of poultry and eliminate pullorum disease. More information regarding the NPIP Program and possibly getting your flock NPIP certified is available through the ND Department of Agriculture at http://www.nd.gov/ndda/program/national-poultry-improvement-plan and USDA APHIS at http://www.aphis.usda.gov/animal_health/animal_dis_spec/poultry/.

When it comes to having individual birds tested, it needs to be noted that there has not been very many approved testing agents in the state. There are a small number of veterinary clinics that do have approved testing agents so you may want to check with your veterinary clinic to see if they offer the service. A training meeting to certify additional testing agent across the state was hosted by the ND Department of Agriculture, Animal Health Division on March 26th in Bismarck. Plans are to develop a list of available certified agents willing to test individual birds or flocks, which will be posted to the ND Department of Agriculture website listed above, along with a Frequently Asked Questions page on pullorum testing and certification.

If you want to use the Poultry Exhibition Statement of Origin to certify your birds as free of pullorum, make sure the hatchery is NPIP certified and have the form completed at the time of purchase by either the hatchery management or dealer.

If you have any specific questions about compliance or becoming an NPIP approved flock, you can call Dr. Carlson, Dr. Keller, or Kim Spears with the State Board of Animal Health at 701-328-2655.