A Newsletter of the Mississippi Poultry Association

AVIAN INFLUENZA OUTBREAK IN NEIGHBORING STATES CALLS FOR STRICT BIOSECURITY, RAPID RESPONSE

Dr. Jim Watson - State Veterinarian

By now you have all heard about the Avian Influenza outbreak of more than a dozen cases in the Southeast in March. The first case was detected on March 2nd and determined to be H7N9 Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) and the flock was depopulated immediately. This case was just west of Chattanooga and a few miles north of the Alabama line. Within a week another case was discovered just west of the first case, but was determined to be H7N9 Low Pathogenic Avian Influenza (LPAI) virus.

Later, a farm in Southern Kentucky was confirmed positive for LPAI. These viruses are nearly identical except that one has a genetic change that makes it very lethal, causing high mortality, while the other virus causes little to no symptoms in the birds making it difficult for producers to detect a problem.

It has been determined that this is a North American strain of the virus, meaning it is carried by our migratory waterfowl here in North America. This is good news in that it isn’t related to the other influenza viruses in other parts of the world that can make people sick. This virus has shown no signs of affecting humans. The big concern is that the virus mutated to the high path form in Tennessee, and with enough exposure in chickens can do so again.

Therefore it is extremely important that we identify infected flocks early so we can depopulate and eliminate the virus. If you notice any unusual increase in respiratory signs, drop in egg production or slight increase in mortality contact your flock supervisor immediately.

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IN THIS ISSUE

HPAI Outbreak in Tennessee Shows the Importance of Biosecurity and Rapid Response .................................................. COVER

Poultry Growers Should Maintain Heightened Biosecurity Practices ................................................................. 3

Pathogen Challenge Research Facility Under Construction at MSU ............................................................. 7

The Role of the Immune System in the Health of Poultry Flocks ................................................................. 9

MPA Eight Year History Shows Record of Battling Diseases, Promoting the Industry’s Impact .................... 13

Poultry, Forestry Lead Mississippi Agriculture ................................................................. 15

After 80 Years MPA’s Convention is Going Mobile - At Least for the Silent Auction ........................................ 17

Member Spotlight: Live Oak Bank ................................................................. 19

The Current State of the “Waters of the U.S.” Rule .................................................................................. 22

Legislators and Staff Enjoy Eggs, Wings and Fellowship .................................................................. 23

What’s Coming from R&D to the Farm? MPA’s Poultry Health Seminar Gave a Preview .......................... 25

Management School Features Experts on Antibiotic-Free, Lighting, Water Management, Composting ......................... 27

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Because avian influenza (AI) was not a serious threat in the U.S. during the winter of 2015–16 does not mean poultry growers should relax their biosecurity programs. In fact, the avian influenza virus has been isolated in migratory waterfowl here in Mississippi, so we know the disease risk is here in our state. By early August 2016, Africa, Indonesia, and France were already reporting new avian influenza cases. In addition, in late August 2016, the United States Department of Agriculture’s Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) confirmed the presence of H5N2 Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) in a wild mallard duck from a state wildlife refuge near Fairbanks, Alaska. H5N2 HPAI has not been found in the continental U.S.—in either wild or commercial birds—since June 2015. Poultry growers across the U.S., and especially here at home in Mississippi, should remain on high alert and maintain the strictest of biosecurity programs heading into the fall, winter, and spring seasons of 2016–17. Let’s review the importance of biosecurity and practices that growers should have in place to protect their flocks.

**What Is Biosecurity?**

Biosecurity refers to all the procedures used to prevent the introduction and spread of disease-causing organisms in poultry flocks. Biosecurity means doing everything you can to reduce the chances of an infectious disease, such as AI, infectious laryngotracheitis (ILT), Exotic Newcastle, and others, from being carried onto your farm by people, wild animals, pets, equipment, or vehicles. Just as important, it also means doing everything you can to reduce the chance of disease (should it occur on your farm) from leaving your farm. It is simply practicing the necessary steps to protect your birds and the birds of others from a serious disease threat. You cannot control how your friends and neighbors manage their biosecurity programs, but you can control your own program. Focus on making sure that you are not the weak link in the chain. If everyone does this, our chances of getting through another winter without an AI or ILT crisis will increase dramatically.

Even though AI may attract more attention nationally, growers should be as concerned—or perhaps even more so—about a possible ILT outbreak. Like AI, ILT is a reportable disease, and the effects of a serious ILT outbreak can be just as devastating as an AI outbreak. Locally, last winter and spring, there were numerous ILT outbreaks, especially for our neighbors in northwest Alabama. In almost all ILT cases, the cause can be traced back to a failure in biosecurity. This makes maintaining the highest level of biosecurity critically important going into fall and winter when temperatures cool down and AI and ILT will become greater threats.

Because of the concentration of commercial poultry flocks in certain geographic areas, combined with a heavy scattering of backyard poultry flocks, and the inherent disease measures to keep the virus from getting into your poultry house. We can’t do anything about the virus that is being shed by ducks and other migratory waterfowl in the environment, so it is up to us to keep our poultry from being exposed to the virus. USDA Wildlife Services has documented this virus in migratory waterfowl here in Mississippi with duck hunter surveillance. To protect your birds, here are some important things you can do:

1. Follow your company’s biosecurity plan
2. Restrict unnecessary visitors. I have asked regulatory agencies and allied industry to cease unnecessary farm visits for the next 30-45 days
3. If visitors must come onto the farm have them park away from the houses, and wear appropriate protective clothing.
4. Before going into any poultry house use dedicated clothing and footbath

To get text alerts about Poultry Disease updates text the word "poultry" to 70000.

**POULTRY GROWERS SHOULD MAINTAIN HEIGHTENED BIOSECURITY PRACTICES**

*Dr. Tom Tabler - Mississippi State University Extension Service*
risks associated with this type of situation, it is critical that poultry producers practice daily biosecurity measures. The threat of AI, ILT, Exotic Newcastle, and other reportable and non-reportable diseases can be reduced by developing and practicing daily biosecurity procedures and best management practices. Backyard flock owners should implement their own biosecurity programs. Contract poultry growers will have a set of specific practices developed by their integrator that they should become familiar with and work closely with their service technician and other company representatives to put into place. Contract growers should check with their service technician or integrator before implementing a biosecurity program to make sure the practices they are considering are consistent and/or agreeable with their integrator’s established biosecurity program.

How Does Disease Spread?
The most common method of spreading disease from one poultry house to another or one farm to another is the use of contaminated equipment or exposure to contaminated clothing and footwear worn by humans. In addition, rodents and wild birds that have access to your poultry houses are also a disease threat. Clean-out or de-caking equipment shared by multiple growers is a constant disease risk. Make sure any shared equipment is cleaned and disinfected before leaving and before returning to your farm. In addition, integrators must take precautions with live-haul equipment, feed trucks, service vehicles, egg trucks, and egg flats and racks.

Human traffic may be the greatest threat to biosecurity. No one should be on your poultry farm without a good reason to be there. Essential visitors (equipment repair personnel, propane truck drivers, FedEx and UPS drivers, etc.) should wear personal protective equipment (PPE) including disposable coveralls, footwear, and head-gear if they are anywhere near your flock. Visitors should never enter commercial poultry houses unless approved by integrator personnel. Signage should be located at the road (and perhaps at the chicken house) indicating that your farm is a disease-control area with restricted access.

Consider keeping a visitors log so that you know who was on your farm and when. It is additional work to maintain a log, but it could be critical in tracking down the source of the problem should there be a disease outbreak.

Maintain a rodent and pest control program that includes sanitation, rodent-proofing, population reduction, and evaluating and monitoring the rodent and pest situation. Rodents (rats and mice) and insects (such as flies and darkling beetles) can carry and spread disease micro-organisms. Have a rodent-control program in place that involves permanent bait stations and rotating rodenticides on a regular basis to avoid resistance buildup. Keep the area around the chicken houses clean and free of trash, old equipment, and other items that may offer homes or hiding places for rodents. Keep the grass and weeds mowed near the houses to prevent hiding places. Also rotate products used for darkling beetle control regularly (every two to three flocks) to prevent beetle resistance from occurring.

Clean up any spilled feed near feed bins as this will attract unwanted wild birds, rodents, and insects.

Contract poultry growers should avoid all contact with non-commercial poultry, including backyard flocks, county and state fair poultry exhibits, chicken auctions and markets, poultry shows, and bird fanciers. Any non-commercial bird represents an extremely high-risk contact because often these birds are exposed to many different species and flocks of other birds, greatly increasing the disease risk. In addition, you have no way of knowing what any non-commercial bird may or may not have been vaccinated against.

Growers should avoid any type of wild bird expo- sure. Bird-proof your houses so that sparrows, starlings, and other wild birds cannot gain access to your flock.

Avoid contact with waterfowl such as ducks and geese and game birds such as turkeys. If you have a farm pond, be aware of the potential of carrying droppings from waterfowl and other wild birds that visit the pond into your poultry houses. Wild birds, especially waterfowl, are well known to be carriers of avian influenza and other diseases. If you hunt waterfowl, take extra biosecurity precautions (i.e., stay away from your flock for 72 hours, shower and change out of your hunting clothes before returning home, disinfect your vehicle’s tires and undercarriage before driving onto the farm).

Proper mortality disposal is vital to prevent the spread of infection and limit exposure to wildlife. Bin or alleyway composters are by far the most common mortality disposal method in Mississippi, and composters work well when managed properly. However, composters can be a source of disease spread and a breach in your biosecurity program when managed improperly. Proper mortality composting requires you follow a recipe. If the moisture content, carbon-to-nitrogen ratio (C:N), oxygen level, levels of bulking agent (or carbon source), and mortality are correct, the composting process works well. However, if one or more of these ingredients is inadequate, you will have issues getting the compost to reach adequately high temperatures to kill disease pathogens.

Compost should reach at least 130 degrees Fahrenheit to ensure that most disease-causing organisms will be killed. Temperatures less than 130 degrees may result in disease-causing organisms being transported from farm to farm by vultures, dogs, and any wild animals that visit improperly managed composters. More information on mortality composting can be found in MSU Extension Publication 2960 Composting Poultry Mortality: A Critical Daily Management Chore at http://extension.msstate.edu/sites/default/files/publications/publications/p2960.pdf. Proper composter management and monitoring the composting process are important aspects of your overall biosecurity program. Do not neglect or take for granted these critical areas.

How Do I Keep My Birds Healthy?
The USDA has developed six simple
steps that can help lower the risk of disease entering your flock:
1. Keep your distance. Isolate your birds from visitors and other birds.
2. Keep it clean. Prevent germs from spreading by cleaning boots and shoes, tools, and equipment.
3. Don’t haul disease home. Change clothes before you visit your birds after going to town or visiting the feed store, co-op, poultry supply store, or other places where chicken growers tend to congregate or after hunting waterfowl. If your vehicle leaves the farm, disinfect the tires and undercarriage at the driveway before driving back to the chicken houses.
4. Don’t borrow disease from your neighbor. Avoid sharing tools and equipment. If you do share, make sure it is cleaned and disinfected before it leaves and before it comes home.
5. Know the warning signs of infectious diseases:
   • coughing, sneezing, watery eyes, nasal discharge, and gasping for breath
   • swollen sinuses
   • decreased feed and water intake, depression, and lethargy
   • drop in egg production or an increase in thin- or soft-shelled eggs
   • watery or green diarrhea
   • purple discoloration of the wattles, comb, and legs
   • sudden increase in bird deaths
6. Report sick birds promptly. Do not wait for the problem to get worse.

If you are a contract commercial poultry or egg producer, you should contact your service technician or integrator for guidance at the first sign of a potential disease issue. Don’t wait on your service technician to make his or her normal weekly visit. That visit might be several days away, and you can’t afford to wait. Call immediately if you suspect something is wrong. If you are a backyard producer and you suspect a problem, contact one of the following:
• your local county Extension agent
• your local veterinarian
• the Mississippi Veterinary Research and Diagnostic Laboratory at Pearl (601-420-4700)
• a poultry Extension specialist in the Mississippi State University Poultry Science Department (662-325-3416)
• the Mississippi Board of Animal Health (601-359-1170 or animal disaster hotline 1-800-722-3106).

Should there be an avian influenza outbreak in Mississippi, the Mississippi Board of Animal Health, in conjunction with USDA, will implement a five-step plan to deal with the disease. This plan will limit the exposure of healthy, non-infected flocks in order to contain the disease as quickly as possible and continue to ensure a safe and secure food supply by humanely euthanizing the infected flock(s). The plan calls for the following steps:
1. Quarantine. Restrict movement of poultry/equipment into and out of the control area.
2. Depopulate. Humanely euthanize the affected flock(s), perhaps using a variety of methods, as quickly as possible to prevent disease spread.
3. Monitor region. Test wild/domestic birds in a broad area surrounding the quarantine zone.
4. Clean and disinfect. Kill the virus in the affected locations.
5. Test. Confirm that the poultry farm is free of avian influenza virus before allowing repopulation.

**Poultry is and will continue to remain safe to eat.**

Current cooking methods that are already recommended by the USDA and the FDA for poultry and eggs to prevent other infections will also destroy influenza viruses. It is recommended that poultry be cooked to 165 degrees Fahrenheit. This is true of poultry products all the time, not just in a disease outbreak situation. However, because of personal preference, some consumers may wish to cook poultry to a higher temperature, and that is fine.

For additional information, there are several publications related to avian influenza and poultry farm biosecurity that were produced last year by the Mississippi Board of Animal Health and Mississippi State University Extension Service. They are available online at the MSU Extension website (extension.msstate.edu) or on the front page of the MSU poultry science department website (www.poultry.msstate.edu). These publications include:
• Avian Influenza: Things You Should Know http://extension.msstate.edu/publications/information-sheets/avian-influenza-things-you-should-know
• Biosecurity Measures to Combat Avian Influenza Threat http://extension.msstate.edu/sites/default/files/publications/information-sheets/is2015.pdf
• Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza Biosecurity Checklist http://extension.msstate.edu/sites/default/files/publications/information-sheets/is2014.pdf

**Summary**

A strong biosecurity program in place on every poultry farm (commercial or backyard) in Mississippi is our best defense against AI, ILT, and other diseases. Poultry growers cannot let their guard down simply because there was not an avian influenza outbreak last winter. Not having an outbreak last winter does not guarantee that there won’t be an outbreak this fall or winter or next spring.

Growers must be vigilant and continue to maintain the same high level of biosecurity in the coming months that was in place last winter. It is easy to become complacent and lulled into a false sense of security, especially if several months go by and nothing really serious happens. However, it’s usually when we become complacent that some-thing serious does happen. Don’t let it happen on your farm. Maintain a strong biosecurity program to keep your farm safe and your flocks healthy.
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For several years, as the poultry industry has begun withdrawing antibiotics, companies have become more and more interested in research involving the use of certain pathogens with live birds. Pathogens such as E. coli, clostridium, salmonella, and campylobacter, are ubiquitous in the environment and can cause illness in birds and humans. Research is needed to challenge birds in a controlled environment in order to investigate effective means of preventing illness in the field.

Until now, scientists at Mississippi State in Poultry Science have not had access to a facility in which live bird challenge studies could be conducted. Even though the pathogens in question occur ubiquitously in the environment, studies that include them as a treatment (rather than simply as background ‘noise’), must be done under certain specific conditions. A building or room where such studies are conducted must have floors, wall, and ceilings that are sealed and can be hosed down. The most important aspect of such a facility, however, is the ventilation system that must provide one-way, non-recirculating air that is pre-conditioned and then must exit the room through special filters. These facilities are called Biosecurity Level 2 (BSL-2).

The building that is currently being constructed on the Poultry Research Farm at MSU started out many years ago as a quail building. Over time, the wooden sides deteriorated and finally all that was left was a tin roof held up by steel girders. Two years ago, the Mississippi Agriculture and Forestry Experiment Station (MAFES) expended their Operation Facelift to include on-campus agriculture facilities, in addition to the Research & Extension Centers around the state. As part of that initiative the Poultry Science Department received $75,000 to construct a block building underneath the old quail building roof. Phase I of our Operation Facelift included the external walls and internal walls of six identical bird rooms, a work room for sample collection, and a hallway with garage door access for front end loader access. At the completion of that construction, Dr. Aaron Kiess – one of the scientists whose work will benefit most from this facility – received enough funding from industry to complete the building with regard to plumbing, electricity, painting, etc., but not enough for the ventilation. Until we are able to secure enough to add ventilation (~$125,000), the building will be used to house birds for various teaching and non-pathogen research projects. At some time in the future, we are hopeful of rounding up enough funding to retrofit the building to comply with BSL-2 requirements.
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THE ROLE OF THE IMMUNE SYSTEM IN THE HEALTH OF POULTRY FLOCKS

Dr. Alejandro Banda - Clinical Professor

Commercial birds are exposed to many microorganisms that are present in the environment in which they live. These microorganisms may be viruses, bacteria, fungi, and parasites. Under commercial poultry conditions, the concentration of some of these organisms can reach very high levels. Some organisms are pathogenic, this means they can induce disease or even death. The birds manage to survive microbial infections because their immune system provides protection against the infection and replication of these microorganisms. Therefore, the integrity and proper function of the immune system is critical for the produce healthy and productive chickens.

What is the immune system?
The immune system is a complex group of organs that are present in poultry as well as in mammals. These organs are committed to produce the cells that will serve in the defense against pathogenic microorganisms. The bursa of Fabricius and thymus are the most important immune organs. The bursa is a sac-like organ located at the end of the digestive tract, in the upper part of the cloaca, and the thymus is located along both sides of the neck. These two organs produce the cells that will colonize other immune organs during the development of the immune system. The cells that are generated in the thymus are known as T-lymphocytes. These lymphocytes will respond to the exposure to pathogens by the production of cytokines, which are substances that play different roles to defend the body, especially against viruses and some bacteria and fungi.

In the bursa, B-lymphocytes (B for bursa) are produced and they will produce proteins called antibodies. These antibodies will block (neutralize) viruses and bacteria and thus make them unable to infect. The function of both the thymus and bursa are complementary for the proper immune response of the chickens and both are necessary to keep the birds healthy. Any factor with adverse effects the function on either one or both organs will increase the susceptibility to diseases.

What happens when the immune system does not work properly?
When the immune system is not working properly, there is an increase in the susceptibility to several diseases or to infections by opportunistic microorganisms that in normal conditions do not cause problems. This condition characterized by a dysfunctional immune system with an increased susceptibility to infections is known as immunosuppression. Immunosuppression in the poultry industry is associated with increased mortality, poor productive performance, higher feed conversions, and depressed average daily weight gains. In addition, immunosuppression has a negative impact on poultry processing because of increased plant condemnations due to airsacculitis or to lesions associated with E. coli infections. Furthermore, immunosuppression may produce reduced responsiveness to vaccinations, and may contribute to long-lasting (rolling) and severe postvaccinal reactions.

What can induce immunosuppression in chickens?
There are a number of factors that may induce immunosuppression, such as viruses, stress, mycotoxins and even nutritional problems.

Viruses that can infect and destroy immune cells are important immunosuppressive agents, such as infectious bursal disease virus (IBDV), chicken infectious anemia virus (CAV), Marek disease virus (MDV), avian reovirus, and even some virulent strains of avian influenza and Newcastle disease viruses.

Infectious bursal disease is a widely disseminated viral problem in the United States and worldwide. This disease is characterized by destruction of the bursal tissue with consequent bursal atrophy. Infection with IBDV at an early age is a very common cause of immunosuppression because this virus induces direct destruction of B-lymphocytes and therefore, impairment of the production of antibodies.

Chicken infectious anemia virus causes a disease in young chicks which is characterized by generalized destruction of lymphoid cells, increased mortality and severe anemia.

This virus targets and destroys the lymphocytes in the thymus, this also results in a decrease of the number of cells that play a key role in the defense against other viruses or bacteria.

The environment also exerts a considerable influence on immune status. The role of environmental stress
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induced by several management factors has been described as one of the most common sources of immunosuppression in modern poultry operations. The common sources of stress can be grouped under the following categories:

a) Climatic (extreme heat, cold or humidity)
b) Environmental (poor ventilation, wet litter, harsh caretakers)
c) Nutritional (shortages of nutrients, feed intake problems)
d) Physiological (rapid growth, sexual development in pullets)
e) Physical (catching, immobilization, injections, transport)

Nutritional factors that can be immunosuppressive also include variations in energy levels or intake, feed restriction for broiler breeders, and withholding feed in forced molting practices.

What can be done to reduce the possibility that the poultry flocks get immunosuppressed?

Several things can be done to reduce the possibility that birds develop immunosuppression, or to decrease the severity of the condition. These measures include the prevention of infection by immunosuppressive viruses such as IBDV and CAV, improvement of environmental conditions, and biosecurity.

To control IBDV infections, it is very important to have birds protected at the time of placement, since early IBDV infections are the most damaging. The most popular strategy for IBDV control is hen hyperimmunization. This means that poultry integrators use live IBDV vaccines and two or more inactivated vaccines in replacement pullets and hens in order to generate high levels of antibodies (hyperimmunization). When the hen has high levels of antibodies, these are transferred to broiler progeny providing some level of early protection against field challenge. This is also known as “passive immunity”. In addition to passive immunity, live IBDV vaccines may be given to broilers in an effort to gain active immunity against IBDV. Live IBDV vaccines are administered either in ovo, at hatching and by booster vaccinations in the field.

To prevent problems due to CAV, breeder immunization with inactivated CAV vaccine may be also recommended. Vaccinated hens produce progeny less susceptible to CAV, and in some cases these flocks may perform better than progeny from unvaccinated hens, based on livability, body weights, and feed conversion.

Additional strategies to control immunosuppressive diseases or their effects occur in the management area. Providing an environment with less stress is important to maintain bird health. Poor ventilation and cool temperatures are stressors that make birds more susceptible to disease.

Finally, hygiene and biosecurity are important to reduce the exposure of the birds to pathogenic agents. To reduce birds’ susceptibility, vaccination against other diseases such as Marek disease and infectious bronchitis is also important. The vaccination techniques should be monitored routinely to guarantee the birds receive the vaccine properly.
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In the formative days of the Mississippi Poultry Association, the industry was organized very differently, but many of the same concerns such as disease and public relations were the same in the period before and during World War II as they are today.

At the first annual meeting on June 10, 1938, after the Mississippi Poultry Improvement Association was formed in 1937, there were 15 people, mostly husbands and wives, who owned independent hatcheries, attending the meeting at the Edwards Hotel, now known as the King Edward, in Jackson. Women were as active as the men in making motions and setting the direction of the association.

The first board was made up of three hatcherymen, three breeders and three flock owners. Some of the same officials who are members today were made ex-officio. Then they were known as the Head of the Poultry Department, the Leader in Extension Poultry Work, the Commissioner of Agriculture and the State Livestock Sanitary Board (now the Board of Animal Health). The first legislative agenda was to get laws passed dealing with the importation of eggs and chicks into the state.

Also, in 1938, the board renewed its agreement to work as the entity in Mississippi implementing the National Poultry Improvement Program with the State College (Miss. State University) Extension Service providing the staff. The Association ran the USDA’s NPIP program, now housed at the Board of Animal Health.

Growing the industry by involving youth in raising chickens was an early priority. In 1942, the MPIA minutes note that “It was the opinion that the Association could do nothing better than interest the juniors in poultry.” The group also was very concerned that year about people stealing chickens and agreed to work the Farm Bureau “on legislation to tighten the penalty on the theft of all types of livestock.”

In 1943, the group agreed to hold what eventually became the Poultry Management School but the original purpose of the three days of training in June at State College was “training flock selecting and pullorum testing agents.” The MPIA regulated its members at the time, sanctioning two by removing them from membership for “selling eggs from flocks which were not tested” for disease. Also, this year it was noted there was a shortage of feed. As the workload of the association increased, $10 per month was authorized to hire some clerical help for Mr. F.Z. Beanblossom, MPIA secretary, who worked for Mississippi State University, referred to then as State College.

In 1944, as the MPIA was working to pass a Voluntary Egg Grading Law and Disease Control Law, the legislative committee met with Gov. Thomas L. Bailey who was interested and had “mentioned the Poultry Industry in his inaugural speech.”

In 1945, with so many men and women overseas, which created a labor shortage of labor, the association cut the training school to two days. Also, the MPIA voted to extend membership to turkey growers in the state.

We will continue looking back through MPA’s 80 years of growing the state’s poultry industry and its economy in the next three editions of Emerging Trends.
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POULTRY, FORESTRY LEAD MISSISSIPPI AGRICULTURE

Ms. Linda M. Breazeale - MSU Extension Service

Poultry remains Mississippi’s top agricultural commodity with an estimated value of $2.9 billion, and it shows no signs of slowing down in 2017.

Forestry comes in a distant second with total farm-gate value of $1.4 billion, according to 2016 estimates.

Mississippi State University Extension Service economists just released their estimates for the state’s agricultural commodity values in 2016. The top commodities remain poultry and forestry. Soybeans remain in the third spot, dropping 1.7 percent to just over $1 billion.

Poultry was the largest component of the estimated $7.6 billion value of Mississippi Soybeans were the most profitable row crop in 2016, topping $1 billion in value—down just slightly from the previous year. Cotton came in next, with an estimated value of $442 million. Corn was third among the row crops at $436 million.

While these three are the main row crops in the state, peanuts, rice, sweet potatoes and wheat contributed significantly to the value generated from farms in 2016, as well. Hay, catfish, cattle and specialty crops also add dollars to the state’s agricultural value.

“Agriculture’s reach in the state goes well beyond just the value of the goods produced,” said Brian Williams, an agricultural economist with the Mississippi State University Extension Service. MSU Extension agricultural economist.

Williams said the Extension Service is forecasting an 8 percent increase in poultry values, thanks to an increase in broiler production. Extension economists forecast a decrease of 15 percent in forestry, primarily because of a decline in pine sawtimber prices.

“Broiler production was up 1.8 percent, and prices were 60 cents per pound in 2016, up from 54 cents per pound over the previous year,” Williams said. “Eggs had a decrease of 58 percent in value as the industry recovered from the avian influenza losses in 2015. Mississippi prospered during that outbreak, but prices went from $1.96 a dozen in November 2015 to 48 cents a dozen last June. Mississippi decreased egg production in 2016 by about 1.5 percent.”

MSU Extension poultry specialist Tom Tabler said the poultry market seems to run in cycles with seven strong years followed by seven weak years.

“If that is the case, we are in the fifth strong year, so 2017 should still be good, then trend down after 2018,” he said. “For now, people are still interested in remodeling or building new houses for broilers. Builders have enough work to keep them busy for at least one and maybe a couple of years.”

Tabler said if this past year’s drought had hit the Corn Belt, conditions would not be as positive because higher prices for feed grains (corn and soybeans) would cut into profit margins. Feed costs are roughly 70 percent of the total cost of bringing poultry to market.

“Weather is always a wild card,” he said.

In addition to poultry, other meat producers are continuing to expand.

“It is a little unusual for chicken, beef and pork to all expand at the same time, but that is what we are expecting over the next couple of years. There will be some tough competition for the market share for each product,” he said. “The U.S. probably can’t eat all that meat, so we will need to find additional export markets to support this increase in overall meat production, or else we will have an oversupply of meat down the road.”

Tabler said if there are no major disease outbreaks and farmers enjoy good weather during planting, growing and harvest seasons, 2017 should be another good year for the poultry industry.
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The first Mississippi Poultry Association Convention was in 1938 after the organizational meeting in 1937. It is safe to say, nobody at that meeting in the old Heidelberg Hotel in Jackson had a cell phone.

But this year at our 80th meeting, Sept. 14-18 at the Sandestin Hilton in Destin, Fla., we feel confident nearly everyone will have a cell phone. We plan to let you make use of your cell phone at the final event of the convention, the silent auction part of the Scholarship Auction.

To get you more engaged and to hopefully raise more money, we will use Handbid, a mobile bidding platform. You will set up a Handbid account, be able to view the items on the silent auction and you will receive an instant notification that someone outbid you on an item with the question, do you want to bid again?

Even those who aren’t able to attend the auction can bid on an item from their phones. If you win the item, you can pay directly from your phone, if you prefer.

Others who have used Handbid have found these real-time updates make for more competitive bidding and, in turn, more money for scholarships. We can’t claim to be plowing new ground here, because we learned about the idea from the Poultry Federation in Arkansas, Missouri and Oklahoma, who proclaimed it a success. In addition, the National Turkey Federation used Handbid at their recent meeting and loved it.

Because the auction always falls on a night with a lot of football on television, we will again have televisions in the lobby, for those of you who can’t miss your favorite SEC team. You can watch TV and compete for a shotgun, jewelry or vacations in the auction.

For those of you, who may not be used to buying much online, we will have the students from Mississippi State roaming the ballroom with notebook computers to help you place a bid. Our goal is to make the auction enjoyable, simple - and don’t forget - raise continue giving scholarships to the next generation of industry leaders.

We will be letting you know more about Handbid as we get closer to the Convention.
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In 2014, Live Oak began lending to poultry growers nationwide offering financing for new poultry house construction, expansion of existing facilities, retrofits and land purchases. Today, Live Oak has financed over $800 million in poultry loans.

Live Oak hires an expert within each industry who knows that business inside and out. Each expert leads a team of people who are laser-focused on their industry all day, every day. Armed with a full understanding of the challenges and nuances of those loan deals, our Agriculture loan team is empowered to guide customers not only during the loan process but all through the life of the loan.

Our Agriculture lending team includes construction loan specialists who work with the borrower, the contractor and the engineer throughout the life of the loan and answer all construction questions. The construction loan specialist collects and monitors construction-specific documentation, including contracts, completed construction plan and specifications, insurance and a cost breakdown of the overall project.

In addition to the construction loan specialist, Live Oak’s Business Advisory Group works with the borrower once the loan closes to answer any business related questions and ensure success. Adding value to our customer’s business is our goal.

Daily, our loan officers travel throughout the country to meet with our borrowers. Michael Imming joined Live Oak in 2015 servicing poultry loans in the southeast. “Our team believes in developing strong relationships with our customers. We are more comfortable working out of our truck than in the office,” said Imming.

Live Oak utilizes the SBA (Small Business Administration) 7(a) loan program and provides financing to customers that may not be able to obtain financing conventionally. This product allows hard working Americans to start their own farms. The SBA 7(a) loan program offers competitive rates, no balloon payments, and flexible term length to maximize cash flow.

“I love working for a bank that can change families’ futures. What sets Live Oak apart is the knowledge and expertise that our lenders have in the poultry industry. Most of my family is from Mississippi which makes having the opportunity to help poultry growers there very meaningful,” said Imming.

Live Oak’s strives to help poultry growers become successful small business owners by offering them financing solutions that meet their needs. Visit liveoakbank.com/poultry to learn more or contact Michael Imming at 910.499.4687.
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You can’t breathe easy just yet. President Donald Trump in February rescinded the Obama Administration’s 2015 Waters of the U.S. rule that was widely opposed by poultry associations and all other agricultural groups, but the controversial rule started a flood of litigation still moving through the federal courts to the U.S. Supreme Court.

In 2015, the Obama Administration enacted the Clean Water Rule, commonly known as the Waters of the United States rule (“WOTUS”). While the Obama Administration described the rule as a mere clarification of domestic water regulation under the Clean Water Act, it is argued to greatly expand the reach of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (“EPA”), to include permitting jurisdiction over small bodies of water. WOTUS was immediately challenged in several courts throughout the country, including by the State of Mississippi, and the United States Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit issued a nationwide stay on the rule in October of 2015.

With the election and inauguration of President Trump, increased attention has focused on how his administration will deal with WOTUS, a rule the President criticized during his campaign. On February 28, 2017, in a move championed by John Starkey, President of the U.S. Poultry & Egg Association, President Trump signed an executive order directing the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the EPA to move swiftly to rescind WOTUS, signaling the beginning of a slow administrative process that may take more than 18 months to complete. Any rescission of the rule must go through the formal rulemaking process, including public notice and comment.

On the same day President Trump signed this executive order, EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt signed a notice of intent to review and rescind or revise WOTUS. Also on this day, Representative Mac Thornberry (R-TX) introduced legislation in the U.S. Congress, which would repeal WOTUS and narrowly define “navigable waters”. In light of President Trump’s executive order, the current need for or future of Rep. Thornberry’s bill is unclear.

In January of 2017, the U.S. Supreme Court granted certiorari to hear oral arguments on whether federal district or appellate courts are the proper venue for suits challenging the WOTUS rule. The Court has delayed oral argument, until at least October. However, the Trump Administration has asked the Supreme Court to pause this appeal, requesting the Court to hold the matter in abeyance while a new rule is crafted.

WOTUS has been a source of contention among poultry producers since its inception. As early as 2014, during the initial rulemaking process, the U.S. Poultry & Egg Association, National Chicken Council and National Turkey Federation filed comments with the EPA regarding the, at that time, proposed rule, arguing the rule would bring increased burden and the potential for liability on farmers and landowners. The rule’s uncertainty, along with possible enforcement action and potential criminal sanctions made it a target to the agriculture industry from day one.

The Trump Administration’s recent action certainly comes as a relief to the poultry industry. However, the issue is not yet settled. EPA will undoubtedly see many comments in response to notice and comment proceedings. Moreover, EPA’s actions will certainly be challenged. Since WOTUS was based on a body of scientific work, the Trump EPA will have to develop an alternative scientific basis for withdrawal in order to prevail on likely challenges. The poultry and agriculture industries, as a whole, will certainly be following the WOTUS rule and its potential dismantling. While both the executive branch and Congress have taken steps to undo the rule’s effects, the future of WOTUS may, ultimately, be decided by the U.S. Supreme Court.

If you have any questions or need any additional information about WOTUS, please contact John Milner, MPA Counsel, at jmilner@brunini.com or (601) 960-6842.
LEGISLATORS AND STAFF ENJOY EGGS, WINGS AND FELLOWSHIP

MPA and the Mississippi Egg Marketing Board invited Mississippi Legislators and staff to make an omelet and enjoy some wings at the annual legislative luncheon March 8 at Galloway United Methodist Church across the street from the Capitol.

Cal-Maine Marketing Director Alan Andrews, chair of the Egg Marketing Board, welcomed the crowd of several hundred and introduced celebrity chef Nick Wallace. MPA President Mark Leggett, reminded the group of the economic impact and the number of jobs in the poultry industry. Sanderson Farms Product Development Manager Jenny Katool prepared bone-in and boneless wings, biscuits and fruit.

Legislators served as celebrity chefs to make omelets. The event is always popular as a fun and relaxing time for the legislative staff, who attend in large numbers and who said, “this is one of our favorite events of the year.”

Environmental Law Group

Brunini’s environmental team is “one of the premier practices in the state” and represents major manufacturers and private industry clients.

Brunini has considerable expertise in environmental litigation, regulatory permitting and compliance issues as well as due diligence and transactional matters. John Milner was noted by Chambers USA as being “instrumental in developing Brunini’s environmental practice” into the leadership position it holds today.

John Milner serves as counsel to the Mississippi Poultry Association and has special expertise in poultry-related environmental issues. Partners Gene Wasson also has impressive abilities in the environmental sector.
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WHAT’S COMING FROM R&D TO THE FARM? MPA’S POULTRY HEALTH SEMINAR GAVE A PREVIEW

MPA’s Poultry Health Seminar gave pharmaceutical providers to present what products they have coming to the market that will protect the health and improve the performance of chickens.

About 60 veterinarians, broiler managers, live production managers, faculty and allied staff attended the day-long seminar at the Mississippi Agriculture and Forestry Museum. This is the fourth year Dr. Danny Magee has arranged speakers for this event that according to post-seminar survey results provided members with valuable information.

Dr. Floyd Wilson, with MSU’s Poultry Diagnostic Lab, explained how conditions in breeder houses are related to rooster productivity. In his talk on “Breeder Males: Morphometric of Testicular Sertoli Cells,” he showed that footpad scores, a general indicator of body condition, have an almost an exact correlation to sperm production in roosters which is vital to hatchability.

Dr. Tim Cummings (DVM Miss State CVM) with Zoetis previewed the “Next Generation in ovo Upgrades” with videos showing the operation of a new device for in ovo injection using more robotics and switching to handling eggs with flexible wires instead of suction cups. He also showed the crowd trials of a device for vaccinating and at the same time weighing pullets 10 weeks old or older at a rate of up to 720 per hour which provides a more humane and better way of sorting pullets.

Dr. Bayo Sokale (PhD Miss State Poultry Science) with Evonik 1Gutcare® RY1 to inhibit the growth of Clostridium, reduce mortality and improve litter quality when included in feeds throughout grow out.

Dr. Jaime Ruiz with Elanco explained the benefits of Inteprity. Inteprity is the newest food animal only antibiotic introduced to the U.S. poultry market in 2016. Inteprity was licensed as the first VFD for chickens, requiring veterinary prescription and carefully delineated ages of inclusion: exactly 21 days, starting sometime before 10 days of bird age. Outside the U.S., Inteprity was the antibiotic of choice for 30 years before countries outlawed in-feed antibiotics.

Dr. Sam Christenberry – Phibro Animal Health described the non-antibiotic feed additive MAGNI-PHI. He said MagniPhi has some activity against fungus, virus, parasites, and even snails. At 250ppm (0.5#/ton) MagniPhi trials have shown about 50% coccidiosis reduction.

Dr. Roy Jacob (PhD Miss State Poultry Science) – Bayer Animal Health explained how Victrio works. He said it is the first DNA-based immunostimulator that can be used instead of an antibiotic starting with neonatal chicks.

Dr. Blayne Mozisek with Merck Animal Health presented the benefits of Safe-Guard AquaSol, a dewormer that does not require a withdrawal period that was brought to market a year ago for roundworms which can be a disease vector and reduce performance.

Dr. Luis Gomez with Merial spoke about Avinew / Newxxitek / BDABlen, products for Exotic Newcastle Disease first discovered 1896 and the disease’s ability to survive in the environment for long periods and be carried by migratory birds.

Dr. Jose Linares with Ceva explained the efficacy of Ceva’s vaccine IBron against what is known as kidney bronchitis. He said bronchitis is second only to high path avian influenza in global economic impact.

Dr. Phil Stayer (MS Miss State CVM) – Sanderson Farms, Corporate Veterinarian, explained his experience diagnosing Georgia 08 Bronchitis when the clinical signs in Mississippi were different from those in Georgia.
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The MPA Poultry Management School is scheduled for May 9th and 10th at the College of Veterinary Medicine at Mississippi State University.

We will begin at 1:00 p.m. on May 9th, finish up the first day around 4:30 pm and then head out the VFW for some hospitality time. Bones Crawfish will be onsite cooking this year. Other foods for those who can’t eat crawfish will be served.

There will be buses running to take you to the VFW and back to your hotel.

The next morning, May 10 we will begin at 8:00 a.m. and finish up around noon with a great lunch sponsored by First South Farm Credit.

We have lined up a very informative school with excellent speakers. Please take a look at the attached schedule.

Also, for your convenience, we have reserved blocks of rooms, single and double, for those that want to spend the night.

The Hilton Garden Inn (662) 615-9664. $119.00. Reserve before April, 19, 2017.

The Holiday Inn Express (662) 324-0076. $98.00. Reserve before April 21, 2017.


Please mention MPA/Management School when you contact the hotels so you will receive the special room rate.

Please use the attached registration form to register or you can go to www.mspoultry.org to register online.

TENTATIVE 2017 MPA POULTRY MANAGEMENT SCHOOL AGENDA

Tuesday, May 9, 2017

11:00 A.M. **Registration** - College of Veterinary Medicine Lobby

1:00 – 4:30 P.M. **General Session** - Main Auditorium

**Greg Jordan** - MPA Chairman of Board - Presiding

1:00 – 1:40 P.M. **Update from MSU Departments and USDA**

**Dr. Mary Beck**, Poultry Science Dept.
**Dr. Danny Magee**, College of Vet. Med.
**Dr. John Linhoss**, Dept. of Ag & Biological Engineering
**Dr. Jody Purswell**, USDA

1:40 – 2:20 P.M. **Antibiotic Free/RWA /Discussion**

**Dr. Suzanne Dougherty** – Pecking Around Consulting

2:20 -2:35 P.M. **Break** - Sponsored by Cobb-Vantress, Inc.

2:35 – 3:15 P.M. **Assessing New Products** – Antibiotic Alternatives

**Dr. Kelley Wamsley**, MSU Poultry Science

3:15 – 4:00 P.M. **Evaluating the Causes of Chick Mortality and 7-day House Prep**

**Dr. Sue Ann Hubbard**, Merck Animal Health

4:00 – 4:30 P.M. **Lighting Programs - LED’s**

**Dr. Jody Purswell**, USDA

4:30 – 4:45 P.M. **Board Buses to go to the VFW**

5:00 - P.M. **Hospitality Time**:

Sponsored by: Allied Industry

5:30 P.M. **Dinner - Crawfish Boil**

Sponsored By:
The Allied Industry

Place: VFW of Starkville, Old Highway 25

**Wednesday, May 10, 2017**

7:30 – 11:00 A.M. **Registration** – College of Veterinary Medicine

*Assorted pastries and biscuits will be served.*

8:00 - 8:30 **Effective Live Production Salmonella Reduction**

**Dr. Martha Pulido**, College of Vet Med, PRDL
8:30 – 9:00  Deworming Pullets, A Comprehensive Program/Blackhead and Broiler Trial  
Cyd Collins, House of Raeford

9:00 – 9:30  Waterline Sanitation and Cool Cell Management  
Jesse McCoy, MWI

9:30 -9:45  Break –  
Sponsored by Cobb-Vantress, Inc. & International Paper

9:45 – 10:15  Water Volume and Pipe Size and Water System Diagnostics  
Dr. Jody Purswell, USDA

10:15– 10:45  Composting 1, 2, 3  
How to Measure and Grade Your Program  
Dr. Tom Tabler,  
MSU Poultry Science Dept.

10:45 – 11:30  Biosecurity Lessons Learned  
Inside and Outside Mississippi  
Dr. Joel Cline,  
Wayne Farms LLC

12:00  Lunch  
Sponsored by First South Farm Credit  
Served at MSU Poultry Science Department

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Riding the bus to the Crawfish Boil _____, please check if you will be riding.

You may go online to www.mspoultry.org and register and pay through PayPal.

Registration Fee $125.00 per person for members, $150.00 per person for non-members, and free to MPA Grower Members. Due to Contractual obligations, MPA cannot refund registration fees after May 1, 2017. Make checks payable to MPA or call the MPA office (601) 932.7560 with credit card info. Checks must accompany your registration forms.
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UPCOMING EVENTS:

At all events involving growers, please practice strict biosecurity procedures

- **Beef & Poultry Expo**
  THURSDAY, APRIL 6
  Smith County Agricultural Complex, Raleigh

- **OSHA Regulations Training for Supervisors**
  APRIL 12
  MSU Diagnostic Lab, Pearl

- **Miss. Poultry Management School**
  MAY 9-10
  College of Veterinary Medicine, Mississippi State University

- **Breeder-Hatchery Seminar**
  AUGUST 15
  MSU Diagnostic Lab, Pearl
  AUGUST 16
  Collins Civic Center, Collins

- **80th Annual Miss. Poultry Association Convention**
  SEPT. 14-17
  Sandestin Hilton, Destin, Fla.

At all events involving growers, please practice strict biosecurity procedures.