



# Avian Science Notes

University of California • Cooperative Extension

December 2007



## Californians excel at 4-H Nationals

As usual, the 4-H National Poultry and Egg Conference was held in mid-November in Louisville, Kentucky. I was proud to lead a delegation of 13 competitors, coaches, chaperones, and family members from the Golden State. In the parlance of a city famous for horse racing, you would have been smiling if you had wagered on our California 4-Hers to do well.

**Avian Bowl:** Sixteen teams from across the nation competed in the 2007 Avian Bowl. The team of Abigail Berke (Captain), Rachel Hazeltine, and Chelsea Pugh took the National Championship. The 3 Yolo county 4-Hers defeated all the teams they faced. Congratulations to Coach, Mrs. Jan Johansen for helping her team capture another Avian Bowl victory. Once again, I was the National Chairperson and Judge for Avian Bowl. Both my Asst. Chair, Dr. Mickey Hall, and I were impressed with the knowledge and good sportsmanship shown by all of this year's competitors.

**Egg Preparation Demonstration:** Gabriel DeMartini of Cloverdale brought home the third place award for his Amer-Ital Frittata. Gabe did an excellent job with his Italian-theme presentation. One of the judges, Dr. Claudia Dunkley (U of Georgia) said she looked forward to seeing Gabe on the

Cooking Channel one day! As Gabe's coach, I know what she meant. He has a real talent for both cooking and public speaking. This is the second year that young men from California placed third nationally in this contest (Daniel Berke in 2006). I look forward to seeing more good competitors enter the California Qualifier in 2008.

As many of you know, California has always done very well at the Nationals in Avian Bowl and we have had our successes in Egg Preparation Demonstration. We have experienced only a few top ten placings in Poultry Judging over the years. There are not many opportunities for Californians to do 4-H Poultry Judging. Many states host poultry judging contests with the frequency that we host Avian Bowls. Well, this year the tide turned. 76 competitors representing 19 different states were entered in the Poultry Judging contest. Representing California were Rachel Hazeltine, Sarah Hazeltine, Chelsea Pugh, and Will Simmons. The team competed in evaluation of production hens, ready-to-cook poultry, and market eggs. Awards were given for team and individual placings. The Californians took first place in production hens, eighth place in ready-to-cook poultry, and sixth place in market eggs. Chelsea tied for fifth place and Sarah second in production hens. Most impressively, Sarah finished as the **TOP OVERALL INDIVIDUAL** in the nation. In overall judging, the California team finished fourth.

This was the state's best-ever finish and congratulations go out to all the members, Coach Johansen, and all the parents who supported the team.



## Poultry Disease

Some of you have recently posed questions related to things you have heard or read about disease prevention and treatment of poultry diseases. I would like to respond to some of those questions.

“Is it true that the Diagnostic Lab (California Animal Health and Food Safety - CAHFS - Lab) cannot help us with backyard poultry diseases?”

It is NOT. California is blessed what is recognized as the best diagnostic laboratory system in the nation. While the owners of a sick or dead cow, hog, or lamb would need their veterinarian to make the submission to CAHFS, as a poultry backyarder you can submit a sick or dead chicken for post mortem yourself. And it is FREE.

“What good is a CAHFS report to me, if I cannot understand it?”

First, you will have a diagnosis. You will no longer wonder what is making your birds ill. You may always contact the diagnostician who worked on your bird and ask to discuss the case. If you need additional information, such as a vaccination or other treatment plan, we have at least two outstanding private poultry veterinarians who will review your CAHFS report and work with you. They are:

- Dr. Marion Hammarlund, Riverside (951) 687-2373
- Dr. Jeanne Marie Smith, Placerville (530) 621-4171

While both of these individuals work closely with the University, they are in private practice and you will need to pay them for their services.

“I hear there are some folks who have raised chickens for a long time, who if I call them, will tell me how to treat my sick chicken. Is this a good plan?”

Definitely not. If you are talking about a friend in 4-H or a poultry fancier, these individuals are NOT trained in poultry medicine. It is illegal to practice veterinary medicine without a license. Do not put your friends in that position. A poultry veterinarian will NOT diagnose over the phone. Trained professionals will need to see your birds and/or the professional laboratory work that has already been done on the birds.

Another way to look at it is as follows. If you started having severe pain in your eyes, who would you call? Would you call your teacher? After all she has really good eyes; she sees everything. I hope you or your parents would call an eye doctor, that is, someone professionally trained in issues relating to eye health.

“There are many sites on the Internet dealing with poultry medicines. Some of them say I can call them and they will tell me over the phone what I need to buy for my sick birds. This seems pretty neat; is it a good way to go?”

No. Remember you should never try to medicate a bird until you have a diagnosis. Otherwise you are shooting in the dark, whistling in the wind, throwing your money away, etc. The folks at these companies may be well meaning or not. However, they all are trying to make money, so they will want to sell you something.

“Somebody told me that as soon as his birds start looking bad, he gives them what this person called a broad spectrum antibiotic. Is that a good practice?”

Reader: if you have digested the responses

above, what do you think? The person posing the question has birds that look “bad,” but NO diagnosis. Are antibiotics the proper course?

No, he does not know what the birds have. What are antibiotics good for? Bacterial infections. Does this individual know that the birds have a bacterial infection? No. When you get the flu this winter, you may try to get your MD to give you an antibiotic. After examining you and maybe running some tests, s/he will probably tell you, “No,” and explain that your condition is caused by a virus and antibiotics will do you no good.

“OK, if I don’t know my birds have a bacterial infection, it still couldn’t hurt to give them the broad spectrum antibiotic, could it?”

Yes, it could. Even if your bird has a bacterial infection, you need to know which antibiotics will effectively work on that particular bacterium. This is something the veterinarian can do for you. If you administer a broad spectrum antibiotic without a veterinarian’s advice, you can do damage in several ways. The drug may not help your birds, they will start to die, and you will finally seek veterinary assistance. The fact that the birds have been on the antibiotic may make it very difficult for the veterinarian to get accurate test results. You also run the risk of the drug losing its effectiveness in your flock. By indiscriminately using it now, if it is ever prescribed in the future by a veterinarian, it may have lost its efficacy.

“I’ve been told about products that really help \_\_\_\_\_(fill in the blank with a non-poultry species) dealing with \_\_\_\_\_(fill in your choice of disease or parasite). I was also told I could use this on my chickens, even though the label does not list chickens. That didn’t sound quite right to me. What do you think?”

Junior Livestock Ethics Training Course and remembered that you cannot use products “off label.” That means, if it is not labeled for use in poultry, you CANNOT give it to poultry, unless prescribed by a veterinarian. Good for you. I am proud of you. You did not fall into a pit of unethical behavior.



**Leaders:** Please remember that in California, 4-H is the official youth organization of the University of California. Our Programs have as their foundation, science-based information. Beware of individuals advocating “Add a little bit of this to the water and a touch of that to the feed - it will prevent Disease X and cure Disease Y.” My very wise colleague, Dr. Ralph Ernst refers to this as the Foo Foo Powder Syndrome. His addendum to that is always, “And if the Foo Foo Powder turns the water a different color, then they really think they’re on to something.” What I have noticed recently is that the Foo Foo Powder proponents are now giving extra power to Foo Foo Powders that are “organic.”

As leaders, your role is to help disseminate science-based information. Do not fall into the trap of advocating Foo Foo Powders. We do not practice witchcraft. We are so much better than that. WE ARE THE 4-H PROGRAM OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA.

I think you paid attention during your

## Basic Steps for dealing with Disease

- Isolate the sick birds from the rest of your flock.
- Get a diagnosis from a trained poultry practitioner or diagnostician.
- Treat the birds as directed by the veterinarian.
- Do not medicate until you have a diagnosis.
- Do not use drugs off label.



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## CALANDER 2008

### **GOLD COAST POULTRY FANCIERS**

January 5th & 6th, 2008  
Hollister, CA  
Contact: John Monaco 408 779-2383  
1600 Maple Avenue San Martin CA 95046  
[John@Poultryshow.Com](mailto:John@Poultryshow.Com)

### **PACIFIC POULTRY BREEDERS' ASSOCIATION**

January 11-13  
Stockton, CA  
Contact: Teresia Renwick (530)268-2488  
[renwickranch@sbbmail.com](mailto:renwickranch@sbbmail.com)

### **HUMBOLDT POULTRY FANCIERS**

February 9-10  
Eureka, CA  
Contact: Mary Wilson (541) 723-2079  
[mares\\_a\\_ridin@yahoo.com](mailto:mares_a_ridin@yahoo.com)

### **GREATER CALIFORNIA SOCIETY OF POULTRY FANCIERS**

February 23, 2008  
Fresno, CA  
Contact: Sue Gallegos (559) 855-3951  
[Gcspf@Netptc.Net](mailto:Gcspf@Netptc.Net)  
[Http://www.Gcspf.Com](http://www.Gcspf.Com)

### **MONTEREY BAY BANTAM CLUB**

March 2008, exact date TBA  
Monterey, CA  
Contact: Rita Martin (831) 663-4444  
[Cmad@Linkline.Com](mailto:Cmad@Linkline.Com)

### **SEASIDE FEATHER FANCIERS' SPRING SHOW**

2008 dates TBA  
Held on the Ventura County Fairgrounds  
Contact: Dave Anderson (805) 524-4046  
[Danderson@Keygroupinc.Com](mailto:Danderson@Keygroupinc.Com)

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