

Murder In Hong Kong

by Dennis Hawkins

At the end of December, 1997, the government of Hong Kong ordered the mass killing of every chicken in the country. "No chickens will be allowed to walk free in the territory," said Lessie Wei, the director of agriculture and fisheries. "You won't spot any chickens walking around free." Over 1.3 million chickens were killed in all - most of them innocent. At the time, a few chickens were suspected of transmitting Avian Influenza, known to the world as 'Bird Flu', to humans.

I am avoiding the use of the word 'slaughter' here because that is not what the Hong Kong government did, they simply 'killed'. The word 'slaughter' implies that the bird's bodies were used for something positive (like maybe dog food), but they weren't. Their rotting bodies were hauled to a landfill and dumped. When a chicken is slaughtered for food, at least it dies with a little dignity. The Hong Kong government robbed the chickens of Hong Kong of even that little bit of dignity.

Several humans died of Avian Influenza and many others developed antibodies. When it comes to infectious diseases, a human being will either come down with the disease itself or develop antibodies after exposure. Which one depends on several factors such as the persons overall health, the strength of their immune system, and the veraciousness of the disease itself. It has been commonplace for humans already suffering with AIDS to get Avian Influenza, Avian Tuberculosis, and many other bird diseases. However, for healthy people, Avian Influenza was never a real threat until the incident in Hong Kong.

The official excuse from Hong Kong for committing such an atrocity was simply that they felt that they had to do something and that is what they did. There was no scientific basis for what they did. Because of the large population of chickens, the government was quick to jump to the conclusion that the disease was spread from Chickens to humans. It wasn't. After all the chickens were killed, scientists discovered that the disease was actually spread from waterfowl to humans. While there were a few chickens that had also caught the disease, they were not responsible for spreading the disease to humans.

About 95% of the chickens killed were neither infected, nor exposed to Avian Influenza, but they were killed anyway. The virus is classified as A(H5N1). According to Dr. David A. Halvorson, DVM ACPV, "Making a vaccine for H5 is not rocket science. We used such a vaccine in turkeys in Minnesota about 15 years ago. The current thinking by regulatory people is confused as to whether to allow chickens to be vaccinated or not. In the 1983 High Path H5 outbreak in Pennsylvania, vaccine use was not allowed."

So why won't the government allow chickens to be vaccinated against Avian Influenza? The answer is simple - Laziness. It turns out that the vaccine causes the

chickens to develop antibodies against the disease. This is normal for vaccines and it protects the birds from actually coming down with the disease. The problem, as government people see it, is that vaccinated birds will test positive for the disease even though they don't actually have it - thus making the government people have to work a little harder for their paychecks. So until scientists can come up with a vaccine that is effective and doesn't cause undue hardships for government workers, a vaccine will not be permitted.

It is clear that the use of a vaccine against H5N1 Avian Influenza would have been the most logical thing to use in Hong Kong rather than simply killing all the birds. However, don't assume that this kind of thing only happens in other countries. It has happened in the USA as well. In the 1970's, the USDA, the California Department of Food and Agriculture, and the Department of Fish and Game were responsible for killing off large collections of exotic birds that were suspected as having been exposed to Exotic Newcastle Disease. Some were even privately owned pets. Again, although this disease is contagious to chickens, a vaccine was available for use. Great Britain chose to use the vaccine and were very successful in controlling the disease without resorting to barbaric practices.

In summary, the Hong Kong government's action was a knee-jerk response to public panic. The Hong Kong news media played the story to its fullest and was largely responsible for causing that panic. The Hong Kong government did not survive their fiasco unblemished and was criticized worldwide for their knee-jerk response. The result - Remember that it was discovered that the bird to human transmission of the disease was from waterfowl? Well, the uninfected and unexposed waterfowl got to live.

Membership Renewals DUE

All memberships go from January 1 to December 31. If you haven't already given your annual dues to Rose, please do so. You wouldn't want to miss out on anything. The club picnic is coming up in April this year and all members are invited to come. Membership also entitles you to receive the club's newsletter. So don't let your membership lapse and send your check to Rose today. If you don't know her address, you can find it on the back page under Mini Membership Application.

1998 Fair Winners

We had a lot of good quality birds at the fair this year and deciding which ones were best was a tough call. Our poultry judge, Dr. Porcher, had a tough row to hoe, but he managed to single out a few of the best as winners. Lee Salmon's little Silver Laced Wyandotte Bantam managed to get Best of Show, Best Bantam, and Best Cock - Congratulations Lee. All of the winners are shown below:

POULTRY EXHIBITION - OPEN

Best of Show	Lee Salmon
Best Standard	Greg and Margherita Snyder
Best Bantam	Lee Salmon
Best Hen	Greg and Margherita Snyder
Best Cock	Lee Salmon
Best Pullet	Lee Salmon
Best Cockerel	Greg and Margherita Snyder
Best Waterfowl	Lee Salmon
Best Exotic	Lee Salmon
Best Display	Lee Salmon
Best Floor Pen	MaryAnn VanHeusen

Reserve Hen	Jamie Nicholson
Reserve Cock	Jamie Nicholson
Reserve Pullet	Greg and Margherita Snyder
Reserve Cockerel	Richard and Linda Wright
Reserve Waterfowl	Richard and Rose Greggs
Reserve Exotic	MaryAnn VanHeusen

POULTRY EXHIBITION - YOUTH

Best of Show	Marshall Snyder
Best Standard	Marshall Snyder
Best Bantam	Wade Taylor
Best Hen	Wade Taylor
Best Cock	Marshall Snyder
Best Pullet	Marshall Snyder
Best Cockerel	Marshall Snyder
Best Waterfowl	Wade Taylor
Best Exotic	Todd Gring
Best Display	Wade Taylor
Best Floor Pen	Wade Taylor

Reserve Hen	Caryn and Kristin Hein
Reserve Cock	Wade Taylor
Reserve Pullet	Todd Gring
Reserve Cockerel	Todd Gring
Reserve Waterfowl	Wade Taylor
Reserve Exotic	Wade Taylor

POSTER CONTEST - SENIOR

Winner Ben Hoover

POSTER CONTEST - JUNIOR

Winner Will Barhite

Photo Contest Winners

In the Club's photo contest, the winning photographs were displayed at the fair. The winners are shown below:

Best Baby Chick	Keevey Schwartz
Best Dressed	Lee Salmon
Best Color (tie)	Dennis Hawkins
Best Color (tie)	Lee Salmon
Best Saying	Lee Salmon
Most Original	Lee Salmon
Natural Setting	Arvis Okerson

Special thanks go to Pol Isena of Pol Isena Photography who did the judging. Mr. Isena also displayed photographs that he took of some of our chickens during the November 1997 meeting. In all honesty, his photographs were best of all.



Annual Fiscal Announcement

The club's annual after-the-fair fiscal announcement will be made at the next meeting. This is the Treasurer's report that everybody looks forward to. Did the club earn money or did it lose money? The answer to that question is a closely guarded secret that only Rose knows. Not even Lee, our president, knows for sure how well or how bad we did this year. Rose will divulge the figures at the February meeting. The specifics of the announcement will not be printed in the newsletter, so if you are interested, then you must come to the meeting.

"Plastics" of the 21st Century?

by Don Comis, USDA-ARS

"Plastics" was the career suggestion that alarmed Dustin Hoffman's title character in the 1967 movie classic The Graduate.

Could chicken feathers replace plastics as an environmentally friendly investment for the 21st century? After all, fiber from feathers can literally replace part of the plastics in many products, according to Walter Schmidt, a scientist with the Agricultural Research Service at Beltsville, Md.

Earlier this month, Schmidt and ARS colleagues George Gassner, Mike Line, Rolland Waters and Clayton Thomas received a patent for a process for extracting fiber from feathers.

The invention could lead to feather-fiber substitutes for wood fiber and fiberglass as well as plastics. The process includes sanitizing and softening the fibers after their removal from feather quills. The key is the keratin, an animal protein fiber in all feathers and wool. Keratin, much stronger than plant cellulose fiber, has the strength of nylon and other synthetics.

Schmidt led the research team that found ways to add value to feathers, a byproduct of poultry production. At worst, the feathers posed a disposal problem, although they can be made into a marginally profitable feed additive.

The team has worked with industry on products from feathers. For example, various industries have incorporated feather fibers into test products for possible commercial production, such as biodegradable diapers, filters and insulation.

By hand, Schmidt has also beaten feather fibers to a pulp to make paper.

His colorful samples show off this paper's unusual texture and dyeing properties. Schmidt also has samples of feather-paper plant pots and laminates of feather fibers blended with plastic. These composites could be used as insulation for homes and autos, molded into automobile dashboards and door panels, or turned into clothing and other fabrics.

Feather fibers can lower costs by replacing a portion of significantly more expensive plastic or fiberglass. They offer other advantages, too; for example, feather fibers are more absorbent than wood fibers.

Feathers for fiber can come from any bird. Commercial chickens, though, have built-in color control: They're bred to have white feathers.

Mini Membership Application

Send your name, address, telephone number, and check (no currency please) for the dues to:

PBCPFA c/o Rose Greggs, Treasurer
8643 El Paso Dr.
Lake Worth, FL 33467-1109

Include the names and ages of your children (if any), your Email address (if applicable), and your full 9 digit zip code (if in USA). The dues for the PBCPFA club are \$12 for families and \$8 for individuals and run from January 1 to December 31. New members joining after June 30 are eligible for an initial half price rate. For existing members, all renewals are due December 31 and are for one year. Non-US members, please add \$8 for postage. Sorry, we can only accept checks payable in U.S. funds.

Refreshments served and a raffle at every meeting!

Classified

Rate: \$1 per line. Members get first three lines free. Send check payable to PBCPFA to Rose Greggs, 8643 El Paso Dr., Lake Worth, FL 33467-1109.

FOR SALE:

PBCPFA T-Shirts, excellent quality, beautiful logo. Assorted sizes are available for \$10.00 (members), \$12.00 (non-members). Contact Richard Greggs (561) 433-8157. Don't be chicken, get yours today.

Black and Partridge Cochon Standard Roosters. Rhode Island Red Pullets and Cockerels of various ages. Contact Richard Greggs at (561) 433-8157.

FOR LOAN OR RENT:

Don't let your flock fall victim to predators! The poultry club owns a trap that members may use free of charge. To reserve your time to use the trap, contact our Property Manager, Richard Greggs, at (561) 433-8157.

WANTED:

Newsletter articles for the PBCPFA newsletter. The deadline is the fourth Friday of the previous month. Submit articles to the editor by mail, Email, or in person at the meeting.

**THE FAIR IS OVER
AND IT IS TIME TO
RELAX**

