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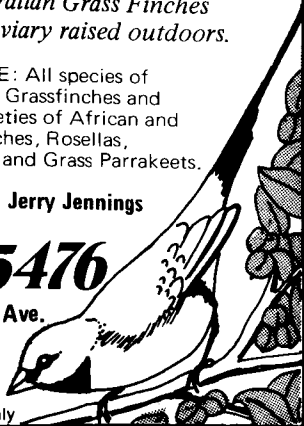
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Two Resolutions Favorable to Aviculture Passed

By the Committee on Transmissible Diseases of Poultry
of the
United States Animal Health Association

The committee on Transmissible Diseases of Poultry in assembly at the eighty-fourth annual meeting of the United States Animal Health Association, held in Louisville, Ky., Nov. 2 thru 7, 1980, approved two resolutions that are in the interests of aviculture.

The resolutions passed were modifications of those presented in his subcommittee report by Dr. Richard E. Baer, president of the American Federation of Aviculture and chairman of the committee's Subcommittee on Cage and Aviary Birds. Dr. Baer, a member of the executive board of the Committee on Transmissible Disease of Poultry, is the sole voice of aviculture in that body composed of representatives of the poultry industry, government poultry regulatory personnel and those engaged in poultry research and education.

After much discussion over the semantics of the wording of the first motion presented in the subcommittee report (see the full text of the report accompanying this article), Dr. Baer, as subcommittee chairman, accepted and proposed an amended version which was passed unanimously. The revised approved resolution reads as follows: "It was so moved and accepted that the Committee supports the establishment of the mechanism for a formal dialogue between the poultry and pet bird industries and regulatory and research people on the problem of V.V.N.D. eradication."

The second resolution passed by the Committee, again after much discussion and with persuasion by the subcommittee chairman, adopted the first part of the second subcommittee report motion, namely: "That the Committee favors the encouragement by government of the domestic captive propagation of cage

and aviary birds." The last portion of the report's proposed second motion, "that, if possible, this (pet bird) industry be recognized by government as an agricultural industry", died without vote as no second to that part of the motion could be obtained.

It must be remembered that aviculture has only one representative on this committee of twenty-seven members. In view of such odds, the passage of the two resolutions represents a definite achievement for aviculture. The problems and goals set forth in the full subcommittee report, however, should still be the concern and objective of all aviculturists. Such concern must be expressed at every opportunity, in letters both to the government agencies involved and in written petitions to your government representatives. The report should be duplicated and sent to your congressman along with your petition and it should be used as a basis for information when making written protest to the Dept. of Agriculture.

Another recommendation was presented to the full committee which had it passed would have had the United States Animal Health Association favoring a policy which could prove detrimental not only to aviculture, but also to the poultry industry. The resolution read: "The United States Animal Health Association, RECOMMENDS, that Veterinary Services, USDA, classify all premises where a Newcastle disease virus has been isolated and biologically typed as non-viscerotropic, but velogenic, be handled as VVND positive, and, FURTHER RECOMMENDS, that research funds be made available for identification of exotic strains of Newcastle disease virus, other than by present biological procedures."

If such an irrational regulation were ever to be put into effect it would open a "Pandora's box" of disastrous consequences for the aviculturist and poultryman both. One of the premises put forth in proposing this resolution was "that such strains have not been recovered recently in domestic poultry", implying that velogenic Newcastle disease is not endemic in this country. This is patently false. In the discussion that followed the presentation of the motion, it was brought to the attention of the committee that indemnities could not be paid on birds destroyed because of infection with an endemic disease unless a full scale eradication program were inaugurated against that disease; and, that such an eradication program could not be applied discriminately only against birds, but must include poultry as well. Dr. Baer pointed out that such a change in policy could result in the extermination of thousands upon thousands more birds with the expenditure of millions and millions of dollars. He questioned where all of this money would be coming from. He further predicted that such a move would destroy all of the cooperation and trust given by the aviculturists to Veterinary Services and would, beyond any doubt, result in serious law suits against government.

The motion was defeated by a vote of 11 to 6, with the six "yea" votes coming mostly from regulatory personnel on the committee. The propriety that these officials who have a vested interest in the passage of such a motion should even vote is questionable. The suspicion is that it is probably these same persons who orchestrated the whole maneuver in the first place; especially, when it is now known that a similar proposal was placed in the Federal Registry on Oct. 9, 1980, with little or no publicity to those most concerned, and with the requirement that all responses be made by Dec. 8, 1980.

It is the responsibility of all aviculturists to cooperate in active opposition to all infringements upon their rights and to encourage others to join with them in our Federation to thwart such oppressive legislation. We must double and triple and even further increase our numbers to be even more effective. Membership brochures are yours for the asking, just by writing to our Home Office. It is in your own interests to actively promote membership in the American Federation of Aviculture.

The following is the complete report of the U.S.A.H.A. Subcommittee on Cage and Aviary Birds:

Report of Subcommittee on Cage and Aviary Birds

by R.E. Baer, D.V.M.
Ohio

The avicultural community in this country has been subjected once again to the emotional shock of having many thousands of birds destroyed in the interests of disease control.

As I prepared this report to present to you, today, I searched for a means of communicating to you in graphic form the trauma that is caused again and again to aviculturists, animal lovers, and true conservationists when they are confronted with such a wholesale slaughter of helpless birds, many of which are irreplaceable. How can I impress upon you and others, as non-bird people, the deep dismay that I and those aside from myself feel when we see what we believe to be a needless destruction of innocent creatures.

Let me just illustrate this report with one incident which occurred in Ohio this

past month and with which I am personally acquainted: A Veterinary Service veterinarian arrived at the home of a young woman who had purchased two blue and gold macaws and two African Grey parrots from a dealer found to have exotic Newcastle disease in his birds. After the usual preliminary procedures and explanations, the employee had the owner hold her pets, all active and apparently healthy, while he killed them. The veterinarian departed with his specimens for diagnosis; the young lady spent the night and the next day in the community hospital in a state of shock and under sedation. She still suffers from emotional trauma. This is but one account undoubtedly repeated many times, of the pathos that are caused by the present V.V.N.D. extermination policies. Is it really necessary in all instances? Can't there be some exceptions?

I know that we are confronted every day with accounts of genocide in all parts of the world. Millions were allowed to starve to death in Cambodia. Hundreds of little school children were machine-gunned down in Afghanistan. So I asked myself, when I was writing



Beautiful creatures that fell victims of man. These gentle peacocks do not realize death is near.

Photo by Michael A. Valente—Fallbrook Enterprise, Fallbrook, Ca.

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this report, who, other than dedicated aviculturists, will even care when I plead for the plight of unfortunate birds.

Over 30,000 birds, many rare and uncommon, have been destroyed in the past several weeks. Now 30,000 is a very large number. 30,000 is more than the capacity of many sports arenas. It is about ten times the population from communities with populations much smaller than 30,000. What would be your feeling if your entire community, all of your relatives and friends, were exterminated?

You might say birds are not people. You are right. A few years ago on television on the Smothers Brothers program much humor was generated by one of the brother's complaint that he only had a chicken for a pet. The facetiousness was readily apparent for everyone knows that no one develops an attachment for a chicken. No one loves a chicken; you eat them. The rare Hawk-headed parrot, the striking Blue and Gold Macaw, the beautiful Cockatoos and the other birds that were destroyed, are not chickens. We don't eat parrots, macaws and cockatoos. They are some of nature's most beautiful creations. We develop strong attachments for them. Like the horse and the dog, they are companion animals. They have graced households since the times of the ancient Romans and Pharaohs and long before that.

These are just some humanistic considerations as to why the indiscriminate destruction of birds is wrong. Let's look at some economics.

Over 24,000 birds have been destroyed in recent weeks. At one holding facility, alone, 8,220 birds were killed. The cost in indemnities of this one extermination to the American taxpayer was \$393,000.00. How many hundreds of thousands of dollars could have been saved for you and me, the taxpayers, if these thousands of birds had been put under strict quarantine and subjected to the necessary diagnostic tests to determine just how many were actually infected. If the owner was unable to provide isolation facilities, they could easily have been moved to another safe site.

U.S.D.A. has received a loan of \$5,000,000.00 from the Commodity Credit Corporation to cover the costs of this single current outbreak. It is operating on borrowed money, money the taxpayer will have to repay. The total cost will probably run into many millions more.

Just a few months ago, over a half-million dollars was spent on another outbreak. A few years ago it cost the taxpayers of this country \$56,000,000.00.

Each year sees the expenditure of over two and a half million dollars just to kill birds. This does not include the salaries and expenses of the hundreds of employees engaged in this work. In Ohio some of my veterinary peers with whom I used to work in Veterinary Services tell me that government budgets have been drastically cut and at least two of them expect to lose their jobs. This is undoubtedly the situation for Veterinary Services in the other 49 states, too. Just think how many veterinarians and supportive personnel could be hired for two and one half millions of dollars a year. Just think what productive work could be done by these people for agriculture if two and one-half million dollars were spent to hire them instead of paying for killing birds. How long will this country continue to stand for such expenditures? can it afford to continue to throw out money on a program that does nothing to curtail the cause of the problem—the smuggling into this country of infected, diseased birds by the hundreds of thousands.

How soon will it be before Sen. Proxmire comes aknocking at the door of Veterinary Services with a "Golden Fleece" award tucked under his arm? How long will it be before a Ralph Nader or a Jack Anderson start to ask questions? What would be the public reaction to a "Sixty-Minute" program on the V.V.N.D. control program waste?

From the conservationist's viewpoint, we have the paradox of one government agency declaring that many of these birds are rare and should be protected, while another agency is killing them by the thousands!

Several years ago the U.S. Dept. of Agriculture went into Mexico in an effort to prevent the spread of Foot and Mouth Disease from that country into ours. They tried the massive killing of infected and exposed cattle as a means of control and eradication. It, in itself, did not work. It almost caused a revolution in our neighboring country. Mexico said that the Foot and Mouth Disease Commission had to come up with some other method or leave the country. A vaccination program was inaugurated and that, combined with judicious testing and depopulation, solved the problem. I know, I was there. I saw some of my fellow workers killed before we changed our ways.

We must look into changing some of our ways in the present Newcastle control program. I hope that the continued carrying out of the present policies will not lead to any blood shed. Anything can happen when you resort to killing of

someone's companion animals. Veterinary Services has already started a small revolution with this round of bird destruction. There are hundreds of angry animal lovers. They insist on changes. I know. I am here. I answer the twenty and more phone calls I receive each day protesting the destruction of these birds. For the past two years you in U.S.A.H.A. have generously extended to me the opportunity to appear before your committee to present the problems that beset our bird industry. Your committee has been most sympathetic to our concerns. It is with appreciation of this and with confidence that I present my present report to you.

One appeal that I bring to you in this report is for consideration of modifications of the present V.V.N.D. task force methods. Can't we explore alternatives, better ways? As one aviculturist so well put it: "Is it conceivable that in this enlightened age of scientific knowhow and technology so advanced of controlling V.V.N.D. in birds is that (now) followed by U.S.D.A. (i.e. one of complete and total destruction of all birds in every facility where the disease is

discovered.)" Can no one come up with a more scientific solution of the problem? Will no one even consider the possibility of other approaches? Can't we at least open our minds to explore other ways? Can't we sit down together and talk about it?

I ask that this committee pass a motion that a national symposium be called in an effort to find better methods of protecting both the poultry and the bird industries. Let's call in the experts from all sides in a round table conference and let them set down with the specialists in disease control to see what can be worked out.

The aviculturist is well aware of the need to protect the poultry industry. We ask for solicitude from the poultry industry for our problems, too. We also want consideration for our closely allied industries.

The pet shop owner, for example, who innocently purchased birds possibly exposed to infection, finds his business placed under quarantine often for an extended period of time pending the outcome of the tests on the purchased birds. With the government diagnostic labora-

tory not geared to handle large numbers of specimens, due to insufficient logistical support, the diagnostic work soon becomes backlogged and the businessman's quarantine goes on indefinitely. In the meantime, his overhead continues, his good will is impaired, and his business suffers. Is this due consideration?

In the state of Pennsylvania, one Pet Land pet shop operator was given permission to isolate his birds in quarantine away from his store pending laboratory test results and his business was permitted to proceed as usual. This makes sense. In an adjacent state, however, another Pet Land pet store owner was denied this same privilege. This was lack of consideration.

The American Federation of Aviculture has given its full cooperation to U.S.D.A. in this most recent outbreak. The propriety of the depopulation of some collections on the sole basis of a history of purchase from an infected source accompanied by the finding of sick birds and virus isolation without characterization has been questioned. This could be interpreted as a violation of our mutual agreement. A.F.A. has tactfully made no issue of the matter in its interest to maintain harmony and to complete the eradication process as expeditiously as possible. Were I a veterinarian in authority for U.S.D.A., however, I believe I would have insisted in holding off on depopulation until I had a definite confirmation of V.V.N.D. isolation. To do otherwise is to open government to serious law suits by a smart lawyer once he confirms that his client's birds were destroyed only to find out later that they were put down and really didn't have V.V.N.D. at all—that it was V.N.D. instead of V.V.N.D. Now, an agricultural advisory council has recommended to the Secretary of Agriculture that all birds infected with and exposed to V.N.D. be destroyed, too. Is this a government attempt to legally cover what they now realize were unwise actions in these previous instances? Perhaps, a few law suits are in order to bring this all out into the open. What's the great hurry in putting birds down? Isolated birds in a city pet shop, often behind a glass partition, or quarantined birds in an urban aviary far from any poultry are not going to spread infection by any sense of the imagination. The potential of disease spread from cage birds is remote in almost all cases except in exceptional locations such as Riverside Co. in California and in similiar areas in other states where there is extensive poultry production—one more reason in favor of long term quarantine and proper testing instead of expensive extermination.

Photo by Michael A. Valente—Fallbrook Enterprise, Fallbrook, Ca.



This tragic fate happened to over 8000 newly imported birds at Pet Farms, Inc., in Miami, Florida on September 10, 1980.

What are alternatives to the present policy? Some would ask for a total ban on bird importations. This is no solution. From prohibition days we know that one cannot legislate people from having what they want. A ban would only greatly increase smuggling *and it is smuggling that is really the cause of all our problems*. If this past outbreak can ever be traced to its origin, I am convinced that as in all other outbreaks, smuggling will once again be implicated. In making this statement I do not wish to imply that those who suffered the tragic loss of their stock were in any way knowingly involved with illegal trafficking in birds. The disease may well have been introduced into the facility through the unaware purchase of domestic bred birds which had been exposed somewhere along the way to diseased, smuggled ones by a person or persons without scruples.

The statement circulated that U.S.D.A. has taken responsibility for the outbreak by allowing contaminated birds to come through a quarantine station, inferring that the disease passed through a quarantine station undetected, is a false statement and the inference is without validity. Aviculturists have complete confidence in Veterinary Services personnel handling quarantine stations as there never has been an evidence of V.V.N.D. being introduced through legally quarantined and properly release birds. The problem is the smuggled bird. Present quarantine and inspection controls do nothing to diminish the number of birds smuggled into the country. It has been estimated that over a million birds, uninspected and possibly diseased, enter illegally every year by the contraband route.

At the opposite end of the pendulum from a ban is the open border policy. This alternative has its strong advocates. It would eliminate smuggling once and for all. Just a year ago at the U.S.A.H.A. meeting in San Diego, the then administrator of A.P.H.I.S. told me that if he had known at the beginning just what troubles the V.V.N.D. control program would bring, he would never had gotten into it. If the program is that bad, maybe we ought to scrap it. Maybe the open border does have merit, especially if it could be combined with a vaccination program at least for imported birds. Israel is reported to have an effective V.V.N.D. vaccine that it uses.

Other livestock industries do not have the problem of animals being smuggled into the country to any extent. Perhaps this is because U.S.D.A. has good import health inspection and vaccination

requirements for these classes of animals other than birds.

How do other countries handle the Newcastle problem? Has anyone even looked into Israel's vaccination program?

The bird business is a billion dollar industry and is growing rapidly. Domestically, alone, it is estimated that aviculturists produce over 400,000 canaries, about 700,000 parakeets (budgerigars) and some 30,000 cockatiels in this country each year together with other assorted cage and aviary birds in significant numbers. 433,784 birds were legally imported last year and an estimated million came in illegally. Over 700,000 birds will enter legally this year.

Contrary to erroneous reports by some organizations, such as World Wildlife Fund, more and more exotic birds are being bred domestically. The aviculturist realize that domestic reproduction will become the only future source of these birds and that only through successful captive breeding will most be saved from extinction. Serious minded organizations, such as the American Federation of Aviculture, are encouraging this domestic production of the rarer birds. The Federation has established a national registry of the uncommon birds now in this country and through its education programs is actively promoting captive propagation of them. Some farsighted breeders have already established large commercial aviaries for the captive propagation of the exotic species, setting up hundreds of pairs for large scale reproduction. On a smaller scale others are specializing in the breeding of one or two species. Here A.F.A.'s national registry will benefit them greatly by providing a reference for the exchange of breeding stock, breeding loans, etc.

Large scale domestic breeding of all species of cage and aviary birds may be the ultimate solution to all of our troubles, the smuggling problem, the conservation concerns, the importation worries and eventually even the pet supply needs. The domestic production of healthy birds deserves encouragement from government. It is already a large though somewhat dispersed industry and can be more developed and established on a larger commercial scale. Even in my generation I have seen the poultry industry grow from little back yard lots and small farm flocks to virtual factories where eggs and meat produce is turned out in immense quantities. Birds are livestock, though they may not be thought of as such in the present conventional way of thinking. Bird breeding is an agricultural industry. Webster defines "agriculture" as the science, art, and

business of producing crops and raising livestock useful to man. Bird breeding is both a science and an art. Bird breeding is big business. Birds are livestock useful to man. Birds are companion animals. Need I remind anyone here that: "Man does not live by bread alone."

Sixty years ago who would have predicted that sometime in the early "forties" soybeans would become a large profitable commercial agricultural crop? Those who advocated the cultivation of soybeans back in the 1920's received little encouragement.

Who would have believed before the 1960's that the ornamental flower, the sunflower, would be grown commercially for its seeds? That 4,000,000 tons of sunflower seeds would be harvested in this country annually and that over 3½ million acres of land would be devoted to this grain? How many of you know that of the above enormous amount of sunflower seed produced, that over 275,000 tons on some 250,000 acres of land are of the confectionary type, used mainly for the feeding of birds? That over twice that quantity is imported from foreign countries for the same purpose? That from three to five times more tons of millet, canary, and other seeds are also grown to be used as bird feed—millions of tons! In light of these statistics, can anyone deny that the billion-dollar-plus bird industry has a tremendous impact on agriculture?

We are an imaginative people. We have ingenuity. Given the need, we produce what our people want. There are those today who doubt that we can harness the sun, the wind and the sea to provide economical alternate sources of energy. The aviculturist will have his detractors, too, but like the poultrymen, given the proper support, he can produce any bird species on a large commercial scale. He can raise healthy birds in quantity as a source alternate to the importation of birds unknown origins. The aviculturist needs government encouragement to do this. He needs government research. Government facilities. He needs his industry to be recognized as the agricultural industry, which it is. I ask this committee for a second motion stating that it favors the encouragement by government of the domestic captive propagation of cage and aviary birds and that, if possible, this industry be recognized by government as an agricultural industry.

The billion dollar bird business is here to stay. It cannot be banned out of existence. It cannot be legislated away. Let's develop some logical productive programs to accommodate it.