

REPORT ON THE EMERGENCY MEETING WITH USDA, AFA, PIJAC, IBI MARCH 26, 1982



There was a good showing of intensely interested aviculturists at the Friday morning, March 26th meeting. Seated at far right is Dr. William Buisch, next to him near foreground, Dr. K.A. Hand, author of "legislation in question."

The A.F.A. office was informed that PIJAC and IBI (Pet Industry Joint Advisory Council and International Bird Institute) were calling a meeting with USDA officials for Friday, March 26th, and requested the attendance and support of our A.F.A. members. After informing A.F.A. President Tom Ireland, and getting his approval to activate the Emergency Procedure, this was done. The Home Office called the two California Regional Vice-presidents. Northern California Vice-president Jim Coffman said that he would call his coordinators and they would get the word out. Southern California Vice-president Marguerite Agrella notified all club delegates in her area with a 714 area code. The Home Office called all those delegates in area codes 213, and 805 within driving distance of Los Angeles. At the opening of the meeting there were many A.F.A. club delegates and members present, coming from as far as Bakersfield and San Diego.

Marshall Meyers, legal council for PIJAC, conducted the meeting. Marshall reviewed the regulation for the sake of those who might not have been familiar

with it and its possible repercussions, and then asked a representative from USDA to state the reason for the necessity of such a regulation. Their justification was based upon this being "Yellow Nape season" and the traditional flow of VVND from California. USDA was represented by Dr. William Buisch and Dr. K.A. Hand of Hyattsville, MD, Dr. Jim Rossword, vet. in charge of enforcement in California. Dr. Patton L. Smith represented California Dept. of Food and Agriculture. It was notable that USDA had attached enough importance to this meeting and the one the previous day with the Pacific Egg and Poultry Association (P.E.P.A.) in San Diego, that they had sent the actual author of this regulation, Dr. Hand and his supervisor, Dr. Buisch, to defend it. P.E.P.A. went on record supporting our opposition to this regulation!

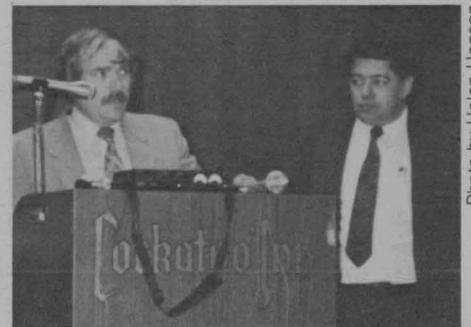
The first part of the period was taken up by the quarantine operators and commercial interests outlining problems they already had or could foresee in living with the regulation as it stands. The general agreement was for the establishment of a "dirty list" of birds—mostly

certain species of Amazons that have proven to be the most common sources of VVND—and reserve banding and record-keeping for only these birds. This left open the question as to the status of those birds already legally here and of those actually bred here.

Despite USDA's contention that this regulation will have no significant economic impact, will not increase costs, and the documentation will not be burdensome, past examples that had originated with these same statements are now weighted with these same increases, resulting in higher prices for birds. This, in turn, increases the profit for the smuggler as he doesn't have this overhead. The smuggler will now be able to take his birds in to be banded, as well as the legitimate importer, and can then raise the price because the smuggled birds would appear to be legally imported.

Breeders objected to the banding regulation itself, giving graphic details of what happens when a bird wearing a band gets caught on a tiny piece of wire or other object. If the bird doesn't chew off its leg, the other birds in the cage will. The result is usually a dead bird resulting in raising the cost of the remaining birds. While this doesn't have the same financial impact on the cost of Budgies as it does for African Greys, the aviculturist has a more personal relationship with his birds and they aren't just dollars or numbers but real, live creatures that he knows personally.

Dr. Patton L. Smith, Chief of the



Dr. Hand, at microphone, answers questions from a thoughtful audience. Marshall Meyers, right, conducted the meeting.

Bureau of Animal Health for the State of California, stunned the USDA representatives with the announcement that he was taking back to his office the recommendation for rescinding of the regulation. He did not believe that the justification for an "emergency" had been shown and the unnecessary inconvenience of abiding by this regulation did not justify its continuation since it doesn't do anything to lessen smuggling or control VVND.

Photo by Helen Hanson



Siegie Meyer, well-known breeder and importer, gave a very convincing testimony against additional leg banding. He produced a rare parrot found dead, due to a leg band accident.

Apparently Dr. Buisch, Dr. Hand, and Dr. Smith had expected an angry, heated group with loud, disorderly name calling because each commented upon

the conduct of the meeting. Each person speaking from the floor presented well-thought-out ideas and many constructive suggestions indicating the concern for the well-being of the birds themselves rather than over-concern with profit. Regulation with a purpose is different than "make work" regulation, which this is.

In summation, Marshall Meyers again pointed out to the USDA our willingness to try to work out solutions to the problems of overcoming smuggling and the spread of VVND. A meeting between USDA and representatives of A.F.A. is already scheduled in Maryland.

During the 60 day comment period we are asked to send in our ideas and suggestions, besides our objection, to the amendment to 9 CFR Part 82, Title 9, Code of Federal Regulations. This comment period ends May 17th and our comments must be in before then to be counted. Form Letters DO NOT count. Write your own letter and ask all of your club members to write to:

J.K. Atwell, Deputy Administrator
Veterinary Services, APHIS-USDA,
Room 870
Federal Bldg.
6505 Belcrest Road
Hyattsville, MD 20782

Everything hinges on the amount of response the government gets from concerned bird people. Dr. Smith's recommendation to rescind the rule is predicated upon the fact that there *is* an

unnecessary and ineffective inconvenience. Only your letters will prove that this is, indeed, the case. This embargo against California can and will spread to other states if left unopposed. This is a concern for *all* A.F.A. members in *all* parts of the country. The regulation will have very heavy, very adverse effects on every aspect of bird-keeping in the U.S.A. It could be the first step to a complete ban on inter-state shipping of psittacine birds.

After you write to J.K. Atwell, write letters to your Federal Representative and Senator informing them that you are very concerned with the amendment to 9 CFR Part 82, Title 9, Code of Federal Regulations. State your case. Ask them to look into the matter, to contact the U.S.D.A., and to reply to your letter.

To help the A.F.A., P.I.J.A.C., and I.B.I. in this fight, please document all experiences you have dealing with this regulation. Record names, titles, times, dates, places, and all pertinent data so the A.F.A. can prepare a history of how this regulation effects the American bird fancy. Send your data to Cliff Witt c/o A.F.A. Home Office, P.O. Box 1568, Redondo Beach, CA 90278.

The A.F.A. has responded to this type of challenge before and has helped eliminate unhealthy and unwise governmental stumbling blocks. With your concerted support, we can do it again.

Helen Hanson
Executive Secretary



Photo by M. Jean Hessler

Some of the AFA representatives attending the meeting, left to right; Don Ashenbrunner, Jean Hessler, Helen Hanson, Ron Brown, Jerry Jennings, Dick Mattice.