

THE UNITED STATES ANIMAL HEALTH ASSOCIATION ESTABLISHES SUB-COMMITTEE ON DISEASES OF CAGE AND AVIARY BIRDS

The United States Animal Health Association at its annual meeting held in Buffalo, N. Y., Oct. 27 to Nov. 2, 1978, established a sub-committee on diseases of cage and aviary birds.

At this annual meeting, The American Federation of Aviculture in the person of its president, Dr. Richard E. Baer, was invited to address the Committee on Transmissible Diseases of Poultry on the subject of The Problems of Aviculture.

After Dr. Baer's presentation, a motion was made and passed to establish the sub-committee. Dr. Baer has been asked to chair this group.

The U.S.A.H.A. was first established as the Interstate Association of Livestock Sanitary Boards and it was later changed to the United States Livestock Sanitary Association. Its original purpose was the study of sanitary science and the dissemination of information and methods pertaining to the control and eradication of infectious diseases among livestock.

In 1968 the name was changed to U.S.A.H.A. with the expanded purpose of developing preventative animal disease programs and concepts, to cope with the ordeal of preventing and controlling the entrance of foreign animal diseases into this country, and to protect the animal health of the nation.

Its scope was broadened to include committees on such matters as: Foreign Animal Diseases, Diseases of Poultry, Wild & Marine Life Diseases, a committee on Zoological Gardens; and, now, one on Diseases of Cage & Aviary Birds has been established.

Membership in U.S.A.H.A. is open to regulatory personnel (State and Federal), national non-profit organizations interested in animal health science, individuals interested and/or working in animal health science, and students in veterinary medicine or related fields.

The American Federation of Aviculture has subscribed to an Allied Organization membership which includes a seat on the executive committee of U.S.A.H.A.

The following is the text of Dr. Baer's presentation:

"EXOTIC AND PET BIRD INDUSTRY PROBLEMS"

"The opportunity to present some of the problems of aviculture before this Committee on Transmissible Diseases of Poul-

try of the United States Animal Health Association is appreciated.

"I have changed the subject of my paper somewhat from the topic assigned me, i.e., Exotic and Pet Bird Industry Problems, to that of the Problems of Aviculture. My reason for this is that the subject assigned me might be construed to be limited to the narrow meaning of the phrase, "bird industry" in which case the problems could be more authoritatively discussed by a representative of that industry. I consider aviculture to be broader in scope and as an aviculturist I feel competent to speak about aviculture's problems.

"First, let me define the terms "aviculture" and "Aviculturist" as I use them. I construe the word "aviculture" to mean the keeping and/or breeding of cage, aviary, exotic or game birds; and "aviculturist" as one who keeps and/or breeds these classes of birds. My definitions exclude domestic fowl and the commercial poultry man, which might be included in the broader meaning of the terms.

"The first problem of aviculture is to present and gain understanding of its complexity and range.

"Probably one of the biggest misconceptions of the word "aviculturist" conjurs up is the picture of a little lady with a canary in the parlor, or the image of budgies in a cage sold in a "dime-store."

"Actually, aviculture comprises and extends from the keeper of a pet bird ("the little lady with a canary") to the collector-breeder (the authentic aviculturist) who collects and in addition, through captive breeding, endeavors to domesticate the various species, perfect standards, establish new mutations and propagate the rare and endangered species. It includes the dealer, both wholesale and retail (the pet shop owner), and takes in the commercial importer (the quarantine station operator). It also covers the zoos and other public collections of birds.

"The categories of birds in aviculture ranges from the usual cage birds through the exotic to the game birds; from pigeons to fancy poultry; everything from the common to the rare, the endangered and the irreplaceable.

"As an industry, aviculture is valued at over five hundred million dollars; as an avocation, it involves hundreds of thousands of dedicated people.

"The industry itself not only consists of

commercial importers, and the dealers and the manufacturers of pet and aviary products, but reaches out to the veterinary profession which provides the medical care and to agriculture which produces the grain to feed. (One feed dealer in Central Ohio, himself, handles over 4,000,000 pounds of sunflower seed for bird feed annually.) That is two thousand tons of sunflower seed alone exclusive of the canary seed, the millet and other seeds raised by the American farmer for bird feed.

"Aside from proper comprehension, aviculture has many other problems, one of which is discriminatory legislation. The aviculturist recognizes the need for laws to protect wildlife and domestic stock. All too often, however, these laws are poorly written and arbitrary in their nature against aviculture and reflect a lack of understanding in their making.

"V.V.N.D. control policies in the past as applied to cage and aviary birds are a good example of discriminatory practices. Fortunately, these policies have been changed and hopefully will be carried out more prudently in the event of future outbreaks. In control of V.V.N.D., the aviculturist and the poultryman should be working in cooperation, not in opposition. Here is a role for U.S.A.H.A.

"Since the establishment of the Federally supervised quarantine facilities, not a single case of V.V.N.D. has been traced back to a bird released from these stations. The V.V.N.D. danger now lies with the smuggled bird.

"The aviculturist wants good healthy birds and the peril of the smuggled bird is even more important to him than it is to the poultryman.

"The new government quarantine program for the recovery of costs and services (users' fees) with the consequential rise in bird prices and monopolistic control on imports, with still more price rises, will greatly increase smuggling and make the probability of another costly V.V.N.D. outbreak much more imminent.

"U.S.A.H.A. and the poultry industry should advocate that this inspection work be government funded. The president of one of the largest poultry associations in the West appeared on television recently to speak in favor of precisely this. Aviculture can unite with the poultry industry here.

"The amount of money needed for this inspection is relatively paltry when compared to what the cost of just one V.V.N.D. outbreak would be.

"While the quarantine stations have proven effective in the control of V.V.N.D. in legally imported birds, the record for the handling of psittacosis is not so good.

"Let me emphasize here that psittacosis

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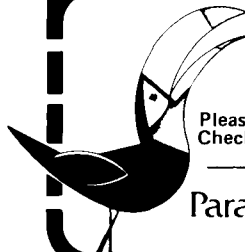
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from imported birds is in no way a major public health problem (C.D.C. statistics point out that the average American citizen is about eight times more liable to be exposed to leprosy than he is to psittacosis from imported birds. And when is the last time any of you came across a leper?) Let me also add that at this time, psittacosis regulation in birds is under the jurisdiction of U.S. Public Health and not U.S.D.A.

"We as aviculturists are aware of our own possible involvement with this disease in our birdkeeping, and, are cognizant that while this is a disease of very minor general public health concern; still, the introduction of just one such infected bird released from quarantine or just one carrier into our flocks could cause calamity.

"The aviculturist feels that U.S.D.A. can do a better job of regulating psittacosis in birds than U.S. Public Health is doing and urges this change in authority.

"U.S.A.H.A. could assist in promoting this change and in looking into better treatment regimens and more uniformity of rules. Better treatment regimens are urgently needed.

"We do not want more government control, but better supervision. We do not want psittacosis infected birds on the market.

"Perhaps, U.S.A.H.A. might investigate effective avian disease control programs used successfully in other countries which result in no dangers either to aviculture or the poultry industry. Is the quarantine of all species of imported birds for 30 days really necessary?

"Aviculturists would like concern for the comfort and safety of birds wherein they would be shipped by the most direct, stressless and safe routes of travel rather than be sent on some long, circuitous shipment just to satisfy bureaucratic red tape.

"Bird lovers want to avoid stress and crowding in bird shipments, and to put an end to the senseless loss of birds resulting from the killing of illegal birds confiscated at the ports of entry. This is inhumane. These could all be saved by a program of quarantine and auction.

"Let's severely punish the perpetrators of the smuggling crime; not the innocent victims.

"U.S.A.H.A. might advocate cooperation through government with other countries in a scientific study of bird populations and a cropping approach to harvest surplus birds in an ethical manner. The wanton destruction of pest populations of birds by the hundreds of thousands in other countries is alarming. This, too, is inhumane. Where is the humane societies concern here?

"The need for veterinarians qualified in

the care and treatment of cage and aviary birds is another very serious problem of aviculture. Courses of instruction in the disease of cage and aviary birds as given in our veterinary colleges at present are most inadequate.

"Aviculture is confronted with many, many problems and I have not come close to listing them all.

"In summary, aviculturists want healthy birds, adequate care and treatment for them, less government control with sound and enlightened supervision; and, the right to enjoy one's avocation with the least amount of restrictions.

"U.S.A.H.A. can provide a forum necessary from which to work out many of aviculture's problems; a forum where aviculture and industry, both pet and poultry, can meet with regulatory officials, Federal and State, and other interested parties to resolve differences; U.S.A.H.A. could help establish that liaison which is needed for the intelligent development of preventative animal disease programs and concepts as pertaining to cage and aviary birds, the control of exotic avian diseases, and the fostering of research into avian disease problems."

The sub-committee on cage and aviary bird diseases will provide a symposium for the study of such diseases, and a national forum where aviculture, the pet industry,

the poultry industry and regulatory personnel can meet in common cause to go over their problems and resolve differences.

A.F.A. urges its allied national non-profit associations, such as I.B.I. and P.I.J.A.C., to subscribe to U.S.A.H.A., along with veterinarians and scientists specializing in avian medicine and nutrition, and other interested persons. The sub-committee should have the widest possible representation so that it can arrive at meaningful solutions.

Dr. Baer reports that the Committee on Transmissible Diseases of Poultry was in agreement with his observation that present college curricula on diseases of cage and aviary birds are inadequate; and a motion was passed recommending that the country's veterinary colleges improve their courses of instruction on avian medicine.

He also states that he was heartened by the following statements presented at the U.S.A.H.A. meeting by one of the state regulatory members:

"We believe that a flourishing cage pet bird industry within the U.S.A. would constitute the greatest bulwark possible against V.V.N.D. and bird smuggling.

"Research monies directed towards enabling expanded domestic breeding and selection for commercial propagation of

exotic cage pet bird species would help eliminate most smuggling because of the lower price and potentially superior characteristics of domestically produced birds.

"It is not inconceivable that a State-Federal Cooperative National Cage Pet Bird Improvement Program, coordinated by Veterinary Services—A.P.H.I.S.—U.S.D.A., would also go a long way towards reducing the prevalence of chlamydiosis, salmonellosis, and influenza in pet birds available to American Families. Additionally, domestic production of exotic birds should help conservation of the world's exotic bird fauna, now threatened in many places by heavy and sometimes cruel export practices."

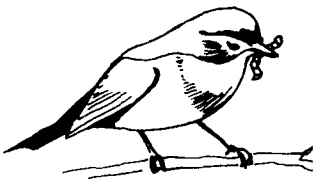
The above is an imaginative approach to some of the problems of aviculture and it has much merit. It reflects that there are regulatory people who do have an understanding of and an enlightened attitude toward aviculture. This proposal is also one which both the humane worker and the conservationist could wholeheartedly endorse.

A model cage pet bird program has been explored recently in discussion between Veterinary Services, the Pennsylvania Bureau of Animal Industry and the local caged pet bird breeders and dealers of that state.

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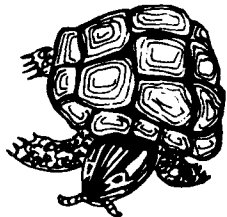
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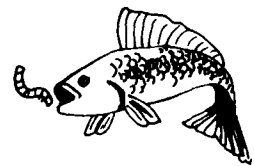
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