

Livestock

Fight the avian flu

By DAN CRUMMETT

WITH epidemiologists saying it's a matter of "when" not "if" a strain of avian flu causes a pandemic across the Western Hemisphere, a Kansas equipment manufacturer and the Propane Education and Research Council are busy showing ways to fight the disease.

In a PERC-sponsored news teleconference at the Sunbelt Ag Expo in Moultrie, Ga., Steve Koch, Flame Engineering Inc., Lacrosse, Kan., noted his Red Dragon flamer has proven effective in research studies and in actual use in Texas during a 2004 avian flu outbreak. It reduced disease and boosted poultry performance.

The Red Dragon consists of a wheeled stainless-steel hood equipped with six propane burners that project 2,000-degree-F flames beneath the hood.

University of Arkansas studies show treating poultry house floors with the disease-killing heat between each flock of birds effectively controls avian flu and other viruses and bacteria. The technology also proved itself in the Texas experience with avian flu and was instrumental in stopping the spread of the disease there.

Currently, 22 of the machines are in use across the South and growers report up to 1/8-pound increase in poultry

Key Points

- Flaming poultry house floors provides nearly 100% disease control.
- Propane council offers flame technology as tool to fight avian flu.
- Growers see improved poultry performance behind the fire treatment.

gains, along with increased livability of their birds. The better performance is linked, in part, to the reduction in ammonia levels behind the flamer.

Mike Welch of Welch Gas in Texas worked with the technology during that state's disease problem and says the boost in production helps pay for the machine in less than two years.

"The Texas Animal Health Commission ordered the flaming of all floor surfaces of poultry operations," he explains. "Afterwards, I've seen growers go back to chemical-only disinfectants for a flock of birds, but they come right back to flame the next time," he adds.

Koch explains the flamer is no substitute for house sanitation, but can be a very effective component for doing a better job of disease control. Growers who successfully use the flamer run it across their house floors after every flock leaves.

"The heat kills disease and flames off



PROPANE BURNERS heat the ground to 2,000 degrees F beneath the Red Dragon's stainless-steel hood. Researchers say the trial by fire kills viruses and bacteria with no residues.

ammonia vapors in a way chemical disinfectants alone cannot," he adds.

The typical treatment takes about an hour to run the 87-inch-wide machine across a poultry house floor.

For more information on the flame method of disease control, visit www.flameengineering.com. Or, call PERC at (202) 452-9054.

Crummett is a Farm Progress executive editor.



FLAME ENGINEERING Inc.'s Red Dragon is fueled with a 100-gallon propane tank and is controlled by tractor-mounted ignition and flame controls.