NEWCASTLE DISEASE OUTBREAKS THREATEN POULTRY INDUSTRY

COLLEGE STATION- An outbreak of Newcastle disease (ND) in El Paso, Texas on Monday has scientists concerned about the poultry industry.

ND, the greatest cause of economic loss in poultry production world wide, is of rising concern because it can be introduced into disease-free areas.

“Doyle’s form,” the most common form of ND, is lethal and causes hemorrhagic lesions in the digestive tract. Symptoms include depression, anorexia, lethargy, respiratory distress, coughing, gasping, diarrhea, and fever.

Texas A&M University Assistant Professor of Veterinary Pathobiology Dr. El-Attrache said, “The first outbreak in the United States occurred in California when gamecocks were smuggled into eastern Los Angeles.” Texas, Ohio, New York and New Mexico are among the ten states that have experienced outbreaks of ND.

University of California Animal Health Professor Dr. Haliu Kinde said, “Newcastle disease is one of the most devastating aspects to the poultry industry because thousands of poultry can be killed at one time.”

Kinde said chickens in low-quality housing may be more susceptible to ND. “Using a higher quality manure-handling system, such as a manure belt disposal system,

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poses less danger of spreading the disease once it is present than would a conventional system because it possesses better sanitation conditions,” he said.

The recent outbreak in El Paso has given poultry producers a reason for concern. Because infected flocks are immediately culled, commercial egg, turkey, and poultry producers face economic loss because it is difficult to export to markets once an outbreak has occurred.

Twelve countries (including Mexico) have banned imports of poultry, eggs, and poultry meat, and have placed stringent measurement requirements on products.

Scientists are working to develop new vaccination programs to control disease spread, but a cure for the disease is yet to be discovered.

“"I am currently helping the Texas Veterinary Medical Diagnostic Laboratory prepare for ND by establishing a new method that would help the lab respond more quickly to a flood of cases,” El-Attrache said.

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