



One Flu Over The Pigeon's Nest?

Avian Flu; concerns and precautions for pigeon fanciers

Ross Dobson, Cornwall, Ontario, November 12, 2005

The news is daily....Avian Flu, with a focus on a specific virus strain (H5N1), is now of global concern with the possibility of this specific lethal strain of bird flu spreading from poultry flocks and other birds to humans, and reaching around the world from its current hot spots in South East Asia and now spreading towards Europe. Dire predications are that thousands and even millions of people could die on a global scale.

Is this something for swallow fanciers to be concerned about? . . . or is it being over-hyped by the media, politicians, and those most likely to profit such as drug companies etc?

The specter of a bird flu "pandemic" and possible implications for fancy pigeon owners has me wondering about what the future holds for bird fanciers everywhere, and our swallow pigeons of course. Let's face it, in the public eye, "pigeons" have bad press and a serious image problem, unlike "doves" and other like birds. To most people, any "pigeon" is associated with or the same as Rock Doves, "mongrels", street birds etc. and therefore dirty and disease-ridden and a risk to human health.

This article discusses the current BIRD FLU issue, and provides sources for further reading and understanding as this is a complex, volatile public health + bird health issue. It is suggested that all pigeon fanciers become very familiar with this issue as a proactive measure so you can discuss the facts and myths with your friends and neighbors (friendly or not), fellow employees or associates, or local press when (not if) the issue arises.

Continued on page 6.

Secretaries Message

Elliot Yeske U S C Sec. / Treas.

Hello everyone, hope all is well with everybody. Hope you all had a wonderful Christmas and I wish you all a healthy and prosperous New Year.

We had a nice show In Des Moines again this year. The Iowa Pigeon Association has a great show hall and can handle all of the entries with plenty of room, excellant lighting and good parking. There were about 80 Swallows entered. Judge Nate Wayne did a fine job as he had a chance to look over many different colors and varieties of swallows. It was good to see so many swallow breeders in one place and as always we had a good time at the show and afterwards as well.

Please check the membership list to see if your dues have expired. Dues are still \$10. Also keep the USC in mind for band needs we have muffed bands size 11 mm and clean leg bands size 8mm. Bands are still 35 cents each. Without the support of the members we will not be able to keep offering bands if we can not sell out of bands or at least come close to it.

The national this year goes out to California, the Cal. Color Pigeon Club is bringing a German judge and it is always a treat to watch these experienced people go over the birds. Nate Wayne and I are planing to go to the National and hope to see alot of you there. Have a great up coming breeding season.

Bob Benson Wins both the NYBS and the Central District Meet at Des Moines

See stories on pages 2, 3, and 4



The 80th annual Des Moines Pigeon Show Champion Swallow Silver Checker. Bred & Owned by Bob Benson



Champion at The NYBS Louisville Kentucky: Blue Checker Young Cock #716 rated Highly Superior. Bred and owned by Bob Benson.

Pigeons on the Prairie *Bob Benson, Central Dist. Director*

The 80th annual Des Moines Pigeon Show was December 9th and 10th. This year was different right from the get-go. The last one hundred miles to Des Moines on the north highway 35 was like a comedy of errors, there were forty to sixty cars in the

ditches caused by approximately six inches of snow and ice Wednesday night. It was a strange sight! Members coming from the east had snow to contend with, but all arrived by Friday afternoon.

Eighty swallows were shown by eleven exhibitors, and these were very good swallows! Nate Wayne was the judge, but he also set up the judging coops on legs he built and transported to the show, then on Saturday he did a fine job of judging!

The Winning Birds

Champion: Silver check Silesian - Bob Benson

Reserve Champion: Blue Barless Thuringer Fullhead - Elliot Yeske

Best Fairy: Black Barless - Gloria Weisgram

Best Thuringer Wing Pigeon: Blue Black Bar - Elliot Yeske

Best Fullhead: Black White Bar - Elliot Yeske

The club auction went well. Birds were donated by:
Merle Starr - pair of Thuringer Fullheads

Perry Mueller - Pair of red spangle Thuringer Wing Pigeons

Jerry Kress - pair of yellow Thuringer wing pigeons

Nate Wayne, Bob Benson - pair silver check Silesians

Also donated prizes:

Nate Wayne - three pigeon sculptures

Nancy Pinke - feather painting

A big thank you to the boys from Michigan (Jakubowski and House), who again set up their aviary as the club's display. I haven't been informed if the club won best display of the show again this year.

The show is over, time to think about pairing for 2006. Good Luck!



Perry Mueller, left, present Reserve Champion Award to Elliot Yeske



Bob Benson with his Champion Swallow



Swallow Sculptures by Nancy Pinke



Swallow Display by Jakubowski and House



Elliot's Best Fullhead



Gloria Weisgram's Best Fairy Swallow



Elliot's Best Thuringer Wing Pigeon



Above & Below Show Room Scenes



Elliot's Best Thuringer Swallow and Reserve Champion



The National Young Bird Show *Perry Mueller*

This year we were able to get Tim Starr to come down and judge. And, I have to say "he did an excellent job". He must have got it from his Dad, Merle. He took his time and went over the birds very carefully. We need to sign him up for our judging program.

We only had Silesians & Clean legs in the show this year. Bob Benson brought a nice team of birds down. He won with a nice Blue Check Cock. Joe Jefferson, one of our newer members, won best Clean Leg with a Blue Barless.

Champion YC716 Bob Benson
 Res. Champ YC726 Bob Benson
 Best Clean leg YH601 Joe Jefferson

Silesian YH

732 S Bob Benson
 761 S Bob Benson
 728 G Bob Benson
 771 S Bob Benson (Best Hen)
 226 S Perry Mueller
 206 S Perry Mueller
 209 S Perry Mueller
 211 S Perry Mueller
 725 S Bob Jakubowski

Silesian YC

726 HS2 Bob Benson (Reserve Champion)
 765 S Bob Benson
 722 G Bob Benson
 716 HS1 Bob Benson (Champion)
 735 S Bob Benson
 740 HS3 Bob Benson
 208 S Perry Mueller

Clean Leg YH

912 G Gerald Kress
 913 S Gerald Kress
 923 S Gerald Kress
 106 S Perry Mueller
 111 S Perry Mueller
 124 S Perry Mueller
 601 HS Joe Jefferson (Best Clean Leg)

Clean Leg YC

117 HS Perry Mueller
 501 G Merl Starr
 602 S Joe Jefferson



Champion Swallow at the NYBS



Bob Benson Receives Champion Award from judge, Tim Starr



Some nice looking clean leg Wing Pigeons at the NYBS

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1. WHAT IS "H5N1"?

"It's one of 15 varieties of avian influenza - bird flu. So far, it's the only one that's shown any ability to directly infect humans. Twice.

Hong Kong, 1997. Eighteen people are stricken with severe respiratory disease. Six of them die. The cause - the H5N1 strain of avian influenza. The infection of humans coincides with an epidemic of a particularly nasty bout of avian influenza in Hong Kong's poultry population, caused by the same strain. Health officials determine that close contact with live infected poultry was the source of human infection. It's the first time that evidence can be found that the virus had jumped directly from birds to humans. Health officials order the destruction of Hong Kong's poultry population. More than 1.5 million birds are killed in three days. There are no more cases of direct transmission of the disease from birds to humans. Some health experts say the action may have averted a pandemic.

Vietnam, 2004. Eight new cases of avian influenza in people. Six people die. Health officials order the culling of millions of birds to try to minimize the threat to people. But killing millions of birds has not eliminated the threat to people from avian flu. By Feb. 2, 2005, 55 people in Vietnam, Cambodia and Thailand had come down with the disease - 42 died. That's an extremely high percentage - one that has the WHO (World Health Organization) warning countries around the world to get ready in case bird flu is the next big one. The WHO says influenza pandemics can be expected to occur three or four times each century, when new virus subtypes emerge and are readily transmitted from person to person. The last great pandemic occurred in 1918-19, when Spanish flu swept the world, killing 40-50 million people, including more than 50,000 in Canada. Experts agree that another pandemic is inevitable and possibly imminent. The WHO is paying particular attention to H5N1 for several reasons:

It mutates rapidly and now has a history of being able to acquire genes from viruses infecting other animal species. It has caused severe disease in humans."

2. NORTH AMERICA AVIAN FLU CASES: We do not (yet) have known cases of H5N1 outbreaks in poultry or other birds in North America, but other outbreaks of Avian Flu virus strains in poultry flocks have occurred. We have some indications of what could happen in North America at least with examples such:

British Columbia, Canada - in April 2002 there was a outbreak of the H7N3 strain on poultry farms in the Fraser Valley, when over 19 million birds were ordered to be culled to control its spread. It took about six months before B.C. was declared to be "free of avian flu". This cull order included "all commercial and backyard flocks of chickens, turkeys, ducks geese and pigeons. This was interesting in that pigeons were included in the cull zone, however I have not yet been able to obtain any clear information on how many pigeon flocks or lofts were impacted nor what types of pigeons. The term "companion birds" were exempted from this cull order, however such were limited to certain birds which were kept indoors. (As a comparison in the Netherlands in 2001 during an Avian Influenza control program in which 30 million chickens were culled, "exotic birds" were exempted, so it boils down to legal definitions in different situations.)

Texas- 2004 - a highly pathogenic strain of H5N2 occurred in a flock of 7,000 chickens in Gonzales County in South Central Texas, and controlled by a cull.

Delaware, New Jersey and Maryland - In February 2004 a low pathogenicity outbreak of the H7N2 strain of Avian Influenza occurred on a few chicken farms and live bird markets.

Mexico - in 1992 an epidemic of H5N2 avian influenza began with low pathogenicity, evolved to a highly fatal form, and was not controlled until 1995.

3. AVIAN FLU IN PIGEONS - (See page 8) Avian Influenza ('Bird Flu') and Pigeons by GORDON A. CHALMERS, DVM

4. SOME PREVENTATIVE ACTIONS and SUGGESTIONS

These are only ideas, subject to discussion on their effectiveness, or not:

Options could include.....

4.1 WHAT YOU CAN DO FOR YOUR SWALLOWS

- Continue to ensure a normal healthy pigeon flock and sanitary loft practices, including absence of crowded conditions; the new buzz word is to ensure effective "BIOSECURITY" for your flock and its housing etc.
- ensure that if any pigeons show symptoms of sickness, isolate them from your main flock quickly until the cause is determined.
- feed and water your birds indoors to avoid any external contamination
- rethink or delay any plans to export or import birds
- ensure that if your local pigeon shows proceed this winter, and you plan to enter some swallows, quarantine the show birds after the show and monitor their health.
- if your swallows are allowed free flight, consider a reduced schedule or even stopping this practice until this Avian Flu situation and its risks become more clear.
- cover the top of any open air fly pens with canvas or other materials in order to minimize the risk of adjacent wild bird droppings contaminating your flock.
- avoid live bird markets, bird auctions, etc.
- restrict other people from entering your loft.
- reduce the wire size for any external open air pens to ensure wild birds such as house sparrows cannot enter.

4.2 WHAT YOU CAN DO FOR YOUR PERSONAL HEALTH PROTECTION

- get an annual flu vaccination (although the seasonal public flu vaccine now available is not designed or based on the Avian Flu virus risk, as it has been designed to combat a variety of annual flu strains, it probably would lower the risk of either getting any flu or reduce the effects of any flu you happen to get exposed to. (A vaccine for H5N1 is not yet available but many firms are working on developing one which takes about four months)
- obtain or arrange access to some of the oral antiviral treatment "TAMIFLU" which is sold by Swiss drug maker Roche. This is currently the best known defense against a flu pandemic and in hot demand around the world (sales have been suspended in some areas due to panic buying).
- as far as I have been able to determine there is no risk to eating cooked chicken so enjoy your KFC etc. as always!
- commercial "Bird Flu Survivor Kits" are already on the market in Europe, feeding the panic associated with the threat of a global pandemic; include 20 disposable respirators, 1 pair safety goggles, 20 pairs of disposable gloves, and one 80 ml bottle of hand sanitizer gel
- upgrade your daily hygiene practices, such as more frequent hand washing after access to your loft or handling birds, changing footwear before entering house etc.

4.3 WHAT YOU CAN DO FOR THE PIGEON HOBBY
As mentioned in the introduction above, the best thing you can do is become very knowledgeable about Avian Flu, its status globally and in your area, and its relevance to domestic fancy pigeon flocks such as yours. You could also submit Bird Flu news updates to the USC Bulletin Editor (Gary Romig) to share with other swallow fanciers around the world, such as in Germany, Australia, Holland, etc.

5. FURTHER READING

There is lots of great information available on the Internet, and much of this is becoming summarized in daily newspapers and even on the TV News, although the TV media tends to be so superficial and short that context and substance is missing. For example on one of the main nightly Canadian TV Network News broadcasts a few weeks ago they showed a group of homing pigeons which had been quarantined (and destroyed) by Australian border /import authorities upon entry to that country from Canada....the short news and pigeon image left the impression in the public eye that all pigeons are now part of the human health problem, whereas a few days after that they admitted that the birds simply had been tested and shown to have some related antibodies (not H5N1) and were not a concern. Yet the follow-up news on this issue (see below) was buried in the papers and not front page anymore so most people would not be aware of the follow up.

“Australia Lifts Ban on Bird Imports from Canada”

SYDNEY, Australia (AP) - Australia lifted a ban on live bird imports from Canada on Wednesday, imposed after three racing pigeons carrying bird flu antibodies were destroyed in quarantine. Australian Agriculture Minister Peter McGauran said Canadian officials had provided compelling evidence that the country was “free of highly pathogenic avian influenza” and capable of meeting the new testing requirements. “I am of the view that the trade in pigeons and hatching eggs from Canada can now resume with the additional testing requirements,” McGauran said in a statement. McGauran said all birds being imported to Australia must now be tested for the bird flu virus and antibodies before being shipped.

Last week, Australia banned live birds imports from Canada after the pigeons tested positive for bird flu antibodies while being held in quarantine in the southern city of Melbourne. The birds were later destroyed. McGauran said, “the pigeons were not carrying bird flu, but only the antibodies - indicating they had been exposed to the virus at some time.”

Another late breaking issue is that some countries may now be restricting pigeon shows, or at least monitoring the situation until this avian flu risk evolves or becomes less.

Germany appears to be continuing its large pigeon shows, while Great Britain has issued the following notice:

“As of Wednesday 26th October there is an immediate ban on all Bird Shows, Bird Auctions and Bird Markets, this order has been placed by DEFRA and will be in place until 31st December, after which time it will be a rolling calendar and is likely to continue after that date. All Shows may apply for a special licence from DEFRA, which will be sent out by the NPA to all affiliated organisations once it is available. If any organisation wishes to apply for the licence it is free to do so and a risk assessment on that show will be officiated by the DEFRA Veterinary Surgeons. Disobeying the ban will be subject to prosecution and fining by DEFRA.”

(Source: NPA of Great Britain web site, also the following advice to pigeon fanciers in Great Britain.)

“NPA ADVICE ON PROTECTING YOUR BIRDS AGAINST AVIAN INFLUENZA DO NOT ALLOW YOUR BIRDS TO FLY OUT, KEEP THEM CAPTIVE AT ALL TIMES UNTIL THE THREAT HAS PASSED, WE WILL ADVISE YOU AS TO WHEN IT IS SAFE TO ALLOW THEM OUT. You may not feel this necessary but should the disease reach the UK all birds within a 6-mile radius of an infection will be culled. It only takes one person to see your birds out flying and because of scare-mongering by the media, it is likely that the public will report this to DEFRA and your birds will be culled, its not worth losing years of work for. We have to be able to confirm with DEFRA that our Members birds are captive to try to avoid a culling order. It is imperative that you heed this advice, don't wait until the disease is here, start NOW. YOUR BIOSECURITY. This means ensuring that everything is kept as clean as possible, change water daily and ensure your feed stock comes from a reputable source. Install a footbath with an appropriate disinfectant in and USE IT, faeces are the most likely source for the spread of disease. YOU HAVE AN OPEN AVIARY COVER THE ROOF OVER TO STOP DROPPINGS FALLING IN FROM OTHER SPECIES. This can be done easily with tarpaulin secured onto the main building. Ensure control of vermin.”

Web sites of interest for further reading:

There are many other sites, simply do a “google search” for key words “Bird Flu” or “Avian Influenza”.

6. CONCLUSIONS: this introduction to Avian Flu is simply to assist us to become more aware of this growing issue and its possible impacts on our swallows and our hobby. I anticipate that this will require further updates and news for the next BULLETIN or even sooner if club executive deem it necessary. Like the virus itself, public health concerns, perceptions and political responses to this issue will most likely evolve over the next few months, and the public actions taken will not necessarily be based on facts or have a scientific or medical basis. Stay tuned!

USC Officers for 2004-2006

President: Merle Starr
Vice President: Perry Mueller
Secretary: Elliot Yeske
Canadian District Director: John Taupert
Eastern District Director: Alan Smith
Central District Director: Bob Benson
Western District Director: Dave Holloway

Swallow Club Treasure's Report

Third Quarter December 27th, 2005

Beginning Balance	\$2,560.40
Income: bands & dues	42.00
Expenses:	
Checking Service Charges Sept., Oct., Nov.	9.00
NPA Club Dues	20.00
NPA Second 1/2 of bands	450.00
Ending Balance	\$2,123.40

Avian Influenza ('Bird Flu') and Pigeons

by

GORDON A CHALMERS, DVM

Lethbridge, Alberta, Canada 2004

The current worldwide concern about the spread of Avian Influenza among humans and poultry in southeast Asia also has many pigeon fanciers interested in the role of pigeons, especially racing pigeons, in this serious disease. On the basis of these concerns, it seems appropriate and timely to take a look at this disease, for the benefit of fanciers.

Influenza has been known since 1878, and is caused by a Type A influenza virus. There are three types of influenza viruses, namely A, B & C. Type A viruses have been recovered from humans, swine and horses, and occasionally, from birds and other mammals. Types B and C are usually isolated only from humans. The virus currently infecting in birds in southeast Asia is a Type A influenza virus.

Thousands of influenza viruses belonging to many subtypes have been recovered from domestic and avian species over the world. Infections in domestic or confined birds have been associated with several forms of the disease, ranging from unapparent to mild upper respiratory disease, to loss of egg production, through to acute fatal disease.

At present, Avian Influenza is recognized in two forms: Highly pathogenic avian influenza, also called Fowl Plague, and Low pathogenic avian influenza. ('Pathogenic' refers to the ability of an infecting agent to produce disease - hence, a virus that is highly pathogenic is capable of producing severe disease and often, acute death.)

The highly pathogenic form spreads rapidly among flocks of poultry and is often highly fatal. It has been noted that one gram (about 1/30th of an ounce) of contaminated droppings from infected chickens can contain enough highly pathogenic virus to infect 1,000,000 birds. Conversely, the low pathogenicity form generally causes only mild disease.

In general, free-flying wild birds do not develop significant disease following infection with influenza viruses, but infections are widespread in many of these birds. It is particularly important to note that influenza viruses are readily recovered from migratory waterfowl, especially ducks, over the world.

There is a great deal of speculation about the importance of this very large reservoir of influenza viruses in wild birds. This reservoir may serve as a source of viruses for other species, including humans, lower mammals, and birds. The high rate of infection allows for the maintenance and emergence of new and potentially highly dangerous strains, by means of mutation and/or genetic reassortment.

Species of birds that become infected with the virus of Avian Influenza shed it from the respiratory tract, from the eyes, and in droppings. Spread of the virus can occur by means of droplets of liquid sneezed by infected birds, or in their droppings. Vehicles, equipment, cages, clothing, and insects in contact with these infective droplets, or with droppings from infected birds, are ready means of spread.

Now, what is the role of pigeons in Avian Influenza? To answer that question more fully, we can look at some past examples of outbreaks of the disease in poultry in North America, plus the current one in Asia, and the tests that were conducted on pigeons collected from areas in which the disease occurred.

In late 1992, antibodies to Avian Influenza were found in blood samples from a commercial flock of turkeys in the north-eastern USA. (Note that antibodies are protective substances that are produced by the defensive network of the body in response to an

infection). Investigation showed that there was a possible association between this flock and live bird markets. An influenza virus designated H5N2 was isolated from birds in one location. State jurisdictions were concerned by this situation and took both control and eradication measures when appropriate. Public poultry markets, shows and exhibitions were quarantined and premises on which the virus were isolated and depopulated.

Because of the very great concern by state and federal officials for the health and economics of the poultry industry in several jurisdictions in the USA, racing pigeons were included under the umbrella of domestic poultry, and accordingly, racing was banned in a number of concerned states. To date, however, the body of scientific evidence indicates strongly that pigeons are not involved in the transmission of Avian Influenza to domestic poultry.

During an outbreak of Avian Influenza (H5N2) nine years earlier (1983-84), again in the north-eastern USA, scientists conducted a survey of wildlife to determine the potential of wild birds to spread disease locally among farms, or to carry the virus to more distant locations. Included in this survey were wild and free-flying domestic ducks and geese, wild or free-flying domestic birds closely associated with poultry farms, poultry manure, or poultry carcasses, mice and rats found inside and around houses containing infected poultry, and wild birds of any species reported sick or dead within the quarantine zone. Tracheal (windpipe) and vent swabs from birds and lungs from mice and rats were examined for virus. As well, in some instances, toes from birds and rodents were also collected for the same purpose. When feasible, blood samples were also obtained from birds and small rodents. Attempts to isolate virus were conducted on 4,132 birds and rodents collected within the quarantine zone. Included in this number were 473 pigeons (92.6% of these pigeons were obtained from known infected farms), 81 pigeon feet (all of them from influenza-affected premises), and seven mourning doves. None of the 4,132 samples was positive for influenza virus. Blood samples from 2,147 non-aquatic birds, including 383 pigeons, were negative for antibodies to Avian Influenza - an indication that infection by this virus had not occurred in these birds. An additional 313 birds, including 50 pigeons, collected from the quarantine zone, were also negative for influenza virus. It is important to note that experimental attempts to infect pigeons with this strain of Avian Influenza did not result in either multiplication of the virus in these pigeons, or evidence of antibodies in the blood. The results of all of these studies indicated that pigeons were not infected with Avian Influenza and did not spread it.

In the 1993 outbreak in the USA, in the period from February to May, blood samples were collected from 17 flocks of meat varieties of pigeons, mainly White Kings located within the quarantine area, for evidence of antibodies to Avian Influenza. Flock sizes varied from 2000 - 3000 birds, and represented a total of about 34,000 - 51,000 birds. Approximately 10 birds per flock were sampled, for a total of 160 birds. In every instance, all pigeons tested were negative for antibodies to Avian Influenza.

Another study published in 1996 on the susceptibility of pigeons to Avian Influenza, found that groups of pigeons inoculated with two strains of highly pathogenic influenza virus or two strains of non-pathogenic virus remained healthy during the 21-day trial period, did

not shed virus, and did not develop antibodies to this disease - further evidence that pigeons are not a factor in the spread of this disease.

More recent evidence from experimental work in 2001/02 has shown that pigeons infected experimentally with the highly pathogenic form of the virus (designated H5N1, and of Hong Kong origin) did not develop signs of this disease and did not have detectable changes to this disease in their tissues. As well, virus was not found in their tissues and neither was it re-isolated from swabs of tissues. These findings indicated once again that pigeons (along with starlings, rats and rabbits used in these studies), are largely resistant to infection with this virus.

Despite these reassuring findings, fanciers should be aware of the very slight possibility that if a returning race bird, or any wild bird for that matter, drops into a poultry farm on which the chickens are infected with Avian Influenza; it could pick up the influenza virus on its feet as it walks through droppings from these infected chickens. If this bird were to fly to another poultry farm, in theory it could be a mechanical means of spreading the virus on its feet to chickens on the second farm. The importance of this fact is that Type A influenza

viruses can remain viable for long periods at moderate environmental temperatures, for four days in water at 22oC (72oF), and for over 30 days at 0oC (32oF). However, as noted in earlier studies, the feet of pigeons collected from affected poultry farms were examined for influenza virus and all were found to be negative.

Given this information from the scientific literature, it is important to note the non-role of pigeons in the spread of Avian Influenza, and the fact that pigeons themselves are not infected by this virus.

The reasons for the understandable caution and concern by regulatory agencies when they are faced with outbreaks of Avian Influenza include the fact that it can be a very costly disease. For example, the US government spent over \$60 million in 1983-84 to eradicate a highly pathogenic H5N2 virus in poultry flocks (both chickens and turkeys).

I hope that this brief look at Avian Influenza and the non-role of pigeons in the spread of this disease to poultry will be of some assurance to concerned fanciers.

Further information on this disease can be obtained from federal or provincial/state governmental agencies.



Clean Leg Swallow Group by Gary Romig



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The Annual Meet Judging Program

Bill Griebel

I'd like to take this opportunity to thank Mike Swanson for his time and effort over the last several years with our judging program. Mike and Kathy Swanson were the ones that put the rules together for the judging program and the criteria for becoming a certified judge.

This coming year there are a few things I'd like to see us do with our program. Mike and I agree along with our President, Merle Starr, that the criteria for becoming a judge may be too cumbersome so we plan on streamlining the rules but not weaken the programs integrity. Another item we will look at is to add new judges to our list. In Germany, judges come together in the Summer for among other things to discuss the different types and colors of swallows they judge and talked about how the birds com-

pared to other years, better, worse or the same. I'd like to see us do a similar program where our judges at the end of the show season give a written report on the birds that they saw. This can be compiled and reported on in a bulletin. More to come.

Finally, I think we need to look at faults on our swallows, take a survey of these faults, compile a list of faults from most-worst to least-worst and each year have our judges at our meets give extra attention to the chosen fault. The judge can then spend extra time with the members at that meet explaining the chosen fault.

I welcome your input on these subjects whether you are on the judges' list or not. Good luck with the up-coming breeding season.