



**MICHIGAN SOYBEAN
PROMOTION COMMITTEE**

a new release



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Soybean Meal...An Essential Part of Poultry Nutrition

Many consumers are fascinated by farm animals. "People are curious about farming, and want to take a look. I'd like to let them," says Dick Patmos, a partner in Sunrise Acres Egg Farm near Hudsonville, Michigan. But keeping the food supply safe prevents his family from letting tourists in their barns.

It's called biosecurity, and it's a major strategy in providing for healthy animals. It means keeping animals safe from biologic agents such as bacteria, viruses, and parasites that could come into contact with the animals.

"Over the years, we have found that people are often the carriers of the diseases that affect poultry," says Richard "Mick" Fulton of the Diagnostic Center for Population and Animal Health at Michigan State University. Dr. Fulton is a board certified-specialist in poultry medicine.

Most livestock and poultry diseases are shed in bodily secretions and excretions. Many are also aerosol. The potential for farm visitors to spread disease is high.

"We want to stay clear of poultry diseases," says Dick Patmos, who runs the family farm with his brother Bill, son-in-law Jeremy DeYoung, and Bill's son Doug. The farm has grown since Dick and Bill's parents started farming nearly 60 years ago, but, like most farms, it's still a family operation.

"This is truly a family business, and we take a great deal of pride in the number of people we feed with just a few acres," Bill says. "I would hate to see the animal industry go in the opposite direction and start using more land to feed fewer people."

Dick agrees. "Americans are the best in the world at feeding people cheaply and safely. We are under tremendous pressure to produce safe food. Why would we take a step backward?"

"Biosecurity starts with feed mills," Dick says. "One reason we operate our own feed mill is biosecurity. We do not sell feed to other farmers, so we avoid farm-to-farm contact." The family buys feed ingredients only from suppliers with effective quality assurance programs. The Patmos family grows corn and soybeans, but not enough for its own needs. The egg farmers rely on soybean meal to provide a high-quality, pathogen-free, highly palatable protein. "Chickens can live on corn alone, but not as well," Bill says. "Soybean meal is an essential part of poultry nutrition. I don't know what we'd do without it."

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“HACCP—hazardous analysis of critical control points—has a large biosecurity aspect. I must follow it or I’ll lose certain customers,” Dick continues. “Our own employees can’t have fowl at home, and no hunters are allowed on our property. We could be damaged by outbreaks of other diseases. We as farmers want to alleviate risk, but our customers are demanding it, too. Also, new government regulations to minimize the risk of avian influenza are coming soon to poultry farms in America. They will contain additional biosecurity measures.”

When domestic chickens, turkeys and ducks share feeding, watering and living areas with wild waterfowl and other birds, they may be exposed to disease. In Asia and Europe, that’s how bird flu transferred from wild to domestic poultry and then to humans.

Fulton says the highly pathogenic Asian strain of avian influenza virus has been found in 40 different countries, but has not been found in the United States. The poultry industry is working to keep it that way. “We check every year for it,” he says. “In Michigan, last year, we did more than 2,000 tests on wild migratory wildfowl and commercial poultry flocks. If highly virulent strains are found in any poultry, they will be depopulated, disposed, and won’t go into the food chain.”

“What we’re doing to assure good, quality, non-diseased, wholesome food is fourfold what we were doing just 8 years ago,” says Dick. “This is because of regulations, our own education, and meeting the specs of our customers.”

Fulton adds, “Our egg supplies are safe. The good news is the bird flu virus can be killed by proper cooking temperature, soap and water, or disinfectant. When eggs are laid, they are washed and disinfected. As long as consumers cook their eggs, they should be fine. And, your mother was right, wash your hands before you eat.”

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The Michigan Soybean Promotion Committee works to enhance the profitability of Michigan’s soybean producers through investment of soybean checkoff funds. MSPC works to build markets for soybeans through educational programs, promotion of biodiesel and other new soybean uses, and funding agronomic research. MSPC is led by a board of farmers elected to direct the investment of soybean checkoff funds on behalf of the more than 10,000 Michigan soybean farmers. For information about soybean checkoff results, call (989) 652-3294 or visit www.michigansoybean.org. To learn more about good stewardship practices and the connection between crop production and animal agriculture, visit www.animalag.org.