

**The original documents are located in Box 7, folder “Quarantines - Pet Industry”
of the Norman Ross Files, 1974-75
at the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.**

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Seven thousand exotic birds--finches, parrots, myna birds, parakeets--are condemned to die by order of the U. S. Department of Agriculture. Such action is deplorable on several counts:

1. This will be a wanton destruction of life.
2. It represents a blow to a business establishment; in this case, the bird importation business of Mr. B. R. Slocum who estimates that the market value of these birds is close to one-half million dollars.
3. Such action will have a detrimental effect on the entire industry of licensed bird importers and as a result will encourage the re-establishment of illicit traffic in bird imports and sales with all the attendant hazards to the health of the public and of domestic birds, including poultry.
4. Such action would represent an unwarranted, arbitrary and capricious decision on the part of a U. S. Government bureau.

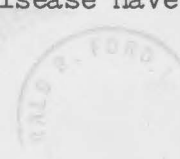
For the above reasons and in view of the facts cited below it is imperative that the decision be reversed or that the U. S. Department of Agriculture be enjoined from enforcing this decision pending the acquisition of new information.

What are the facts?

The Federal Register carries the U. S. Department of Agriculture regulation which reads,

"If frank or clinical Newcastle disease occurs among any commercial or sentinel birds in quarantine, all birds in the facility shall be destroyed or refused entry and the entire facility shall be thoroughly cleaned and then disinfected as directed under the supervision of a Veterinary Services inspector."

This regulation was promulgated in the interest of protecting chickens against the ravages of Newcastle disease, especially the recently recognized strain of velogenic viscerotropic virus. However, this regulation does not fit the situation in Mr. Slocum's aviary inasmuch as no cases of frank or clinical Newcastle disease have



been reported or observed by the staff of the U. S. Department of Agriculture in birds which have already been kept in quarantine for a period exceeding 90 days. It should be noted that this is an extremely long stay in quarantine which is causing stress and strain on the birds and financial losses to their owner. The order to kill the birds was based on the finding of Newcastle disease virus from one sample submitted by a U. S. Department of Agriculture veterinarian. The virus was isolated under circumstances which open to question the validity of this test. First of all, a specimen was obtained by a veterinarian suffering from a respiratory infection. This infection could have been Newcastle disease since the veterinarian had been visiting other bird stations known to contain Newcastle disease. Thus, the sample may have been contaminated by the veterinarian and the virus that was isolated may have been derived from the veterinarian rather than from the bird in question. Second, there may have been a mix-up in the identity of specimens. In fact, the virologist directing this investigation at the U. S. Department of Agriculture laboratory indicated that such a mix-up between specimens had actually occurred in another instance. Third, and perhaps most importantly, as is stated below, this positive isolation represented less than 1% of the birds from Mr. Slocum's aviary that were tested. Fourth, the U. S. Department of Agriculture has taken specimens or samples from over 1,000 birds from Mr. Slocum's aviary and these have proved negative for virus. Thus, at least 99.8% of the birds tested had no Newcastle disease virus.

All these facts notwithstanding and in spite of other inconsistencies in the report from the U. S. Department of Agriculture laboratory, Mr. Slocum requested additional tests in order to obtain more information about the absence of Newcastle disease from these birds, but the U. S. Department of Agriculture would not accede to this request. Expert virologists have indicated that the present evidence does not indicate that Newcastle disease virus is present in Mr. Slocum's aviary and have also suggested additional tests.

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Remarks by Nathaniel P. Reed, Assistant Secretary of the Interior for Fish and Wildlife and Parks, before the Humane Society of the United States, October 19, 1973, Atlanta, Georgia

Ladies and Gentlemen: It's a special pleasure to appear before you. Your organization has been a leader in development of an ethic by which man must forge a new relationship with all other forms of life which share this small planet. I wish to salute Roger Caras and John Hoyt for their continuing efforts to expose a very small segment of our society which continually practices or encourages the inhumane treatment of animals. I have joined your efforts--enthusiastically joined your efforts--to demand an ethic which insists on treating animals with the care and concern as if we were those animals.

Humane as defined by Webster means: (1) having what are considered the best qualities of mankind, kind, tender, merciful, considerate; (2) civilizing, refining, humanizing. This is a noble charge. I do not believe that steel leg-hold traps, non-degradable, non-specific poisons, the traffic in wild animal furs, or the illegal shooting of eagles and hawks would, by any man's definition, be considered among the best qualities of mankind.

A nation which has been party to the increased importation of wild animals from 1967 of 28,684,000 to the 1972 staggering total of over 120,000,000 animals must recognize its faults. Let me cite a few outstanding disgraces:

Between July 1, 1970 and July 1, 1973, with a limited force of agents, we have documented the illegal importation of 33,677 animals, most of which have been seized. Since 1970, seven airlines have been charged with violations involving wildlife importations, one of these violations involved the illegal importation of over 29,900 South American river turtles. Since 1971, our agents have completed 541 endangered species cases of violations of the Lacey Act.

A floodtide of concern--much of which centers around the plight of endangered species and around problems involving trade, movement and handling of animals--has arisen across this country and now is spreading throughout the world. I'm not sure all of us in positions of authority fully comprehend the depth of this concern. The outward signs are obvious: a daily deluge of mail at our offices in Washington or the various State capitals, the rapid growth of organizations lobbying for everything from marine mammals to kangaroos to butterflies, and the increasing attention being paid these problems by the news media, various legislative bodies and the international diplomatic community.

I believe if we concentrate on two areas--the second-rate zoos and the so-called wild animal "pet" business--we can jointly solve some serious problems.



I recognize that separating zoos which are representative of humane approaches to wildlife resources from the underfunded, outdated, poorly conceived zoos all too commonly found across the United States is a difficult and touchy subject. But a visit to New York's Central Park, Washington's National, San Francisco or Portland provides convincing evidence of such inhumanity. I see nothing humane or educational about animals caged like criminals. All too frequently additions to collections are sought by keepers who are in "silent competition" with other zoos. All too frequently, rather than face expensive remodeling, the zoo's limited funds are used to add to the collection.

I can't help wondering why most zoos don't limit the expensive business of showing collected animals, retaining only the progeny of zoo animals. Instead of captured animals, add environmental education centers--which would present first-rate lectures and movies on earth and its creatures. I am assured by those who maintain zoos that their *raison d'etre* is an educational one. I suggest, for instance, that young and old alike could learn far more about African lions from a film narrated by Boyce Reusberger or about baboons narrated by Jane Goodall, or gorillas narrated by Diane Fossey. We could all learn about their distribution, range, the environment of their habitat, their niche with their fellow creatures, their eating, mating, sleeping habits, their daily problems--in fact, we could really learn about their lives in the wild.

What can anyone learn from watching the tragically sad animals represented at most zoos? That a zebra has stripes, giraffes have long necks, polar bears have white hides and brown bears like peanuts!

I have watched with sorrow and anger the children crammed before the gorilla pen at the Washington Zoo. Children watching animals that live in antiseptic, sterile cages having no similarity to the great steaming jungles of their birth. Children can be cruel and they, often in their search to be the crowd's leading jester, seek ways to torment the thoroughly bored gorillas. No zookeeper can persuade me that it is an educational experience worthy of its name if a child, looking at one of the earth's most magnificent creatures, considers the animal an imbecile and laughable, or that the visitor, because of the setting, considers himself superior to that animal..

Anyone who has seen the charge of a male gorilla knows the feeling of the beast's magnificent superiority. Anyone who has seen a 500-pound gorilla carefully, meticulously prepare its night bed shares a sense of wonderment. Anyone who has seen the tender touches among the members of a gorilla clan knows the depth of affection shared by these majestic animals. The zoo gorillas or pandas or lions, tigers, giraffes, snakes, birds--the whole menagerie--are a pathetic spectacle that if not properly cared for, we can do without!

Why not a superb auditorium in the midst of a botanical garden among a limited number of innovatively caged progeny of zoo creatures, born to put up with boredom and confinement of a highly regulated life. Let the great American ecologists--Durward Allen, Starker Leopold, Stanley Cain, Maurice Hornocker, Eugene Odum, to name a few--prepare filmed lectures on the magic interrelationship between animal and habitat which is what ecology is all about.

I can listen to Dr. Allen describe the interrelationship between Isle Royale's wolves and moose by the hour--the poor, wormy, rashy, jittery wolves caged in most zoos have faint resemblance to the power, intelligence and fascination of mature animals living in the wild.

I'd make a terrible zoo-ologist. I don't care that much about the physiology of an animal. I want to know what he eats, how he kills, where he sleeps, and his range. I want to know everything about his environment and how he fits into the ecological system. Zoos should be centers of environmental education, not pathetic exhibitions.

During recent years I have heard a great deal about the role of zoos in the conservation of endangered species. I know that the Pere David Deer and the Przewalskii Horse would be extinct if breeding herds had not been preserved in zoological gardens, and I hear many zoos proclaiming their intent to establish breeding groups of just about every animal on the endangered species list. I am favorably impressed by the dedication and competence of some zoo directors and by the commitment many of these institutions are making toward propagating the animals in their collections. The more advanced actually are reducing the number of species in their collection to concentrate on solving the maintenance and propagation problems of those species they retain. This we encourage.

But far too many institutions are better described as consumers of wildlife than as conservers of wildlife. We find that placing an animal on our endangered species list immediately increases both the demand for and the price of that animal. For example, the number of applications to import cheetah during the year following our designation of this cat as an endangered species was about four times the number imported during the previous year, and the price kept pace with the demand! One can hardly help pondering whether this increase in demand represents a desire to propagate the species or whether it merely represents a desire to add a pair of "high interest" animals to a collection.

Through the administration of our Federal permit system, I intend to see that the traffic in endangered species is carefully restricted to those institutions who can demonstrate the ability to realize the reproductive potential of such animals and that the animals taken come from populations which can safely stand their loss!

During this next year we plan to designate a series of "endangered species survival centers"--institutions fully qualified to specialize in the maintenance and breeding of certain species. It will be such designated survival centers that are permitted to import limited numbers of endangered species or to whom we turn over confiscated animals. Surplus animals produced in the survival centers will be the major source of such creatures to other institutions.

Another kind of so-called zoo, the roadside zoo--the tourist trap where one finds animals confined under conditions so disgusting that no discussion is warranted other than to say that the leadership of the Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife plans to do all it can to make such abominations the charter members of a list of endangered, outmoded animal institutions!

I was begged not to take on inadequate zoos and the wild animal "pet" trade in the same speech, but throwing caution to the wind, I wish to publicly state that the whole shady business of trafficking in captured wild animals in the guise of providing "pets" should come to a prompt conclusion. Insatiable Americans are encouraging the worst dregs of society--wild animal dealers--to strip the world's wildernesses of unprecedented numbers of animals. The numbers are mind-boggling. The effect on native populations is tragic and the inhumanity of the traffic is so colossal as to cry out to all intelligent people--a loud "Stop!"

Recently, for example, Washington newspapers carried a tragic story describing a timber wolf's near fatal attack upon a small boy. This unhappy event didn't take place in the wilds of Alaska or Canada, but rather in the basement of the child's suburban Maryland home! The boy's father had purchased the wolf from a mid-western animal dealer and was keeping it in a very small cage in the basement for possible use in his attack-dog business.

I question the right of any man to own a wolf!

A member of my staff, an aquarist by avocation, recently was shopping for tropical fish in several Maryland pet shops. Among the guppies and angelfish offered for sale were also:

The infamous walking catfish, whose escape into the wild in Florida and subsequent spread northward, whose voracity towards native species, and whose ability to move cross-country from watercourse to watercourse are now well known to ecologists ;

Moray eels--large specimens of which are capable of severing a man's finger;



Lion fish--a beautiful salt water species whose venomous spines are capable of inflicting agonizing wounds upon the unwary handler; and

Piranhas---which are looked upon by some as one of the most dangerous fish in the world.

The pet shop sales personnel appeared totally uninformed concerning the hazard presented by these fish--no information concerning the threat to the environment if a buyer decided to release his newly acquired "pets" into the wild was provided, and the only apparent qualifications needed by a prospective purchaser of even the most hazardous species was the ability to point to the animal he wished and to meet the dealer's price!

When I think of the loss of fish in transit, the stripping of reefs, streams, ponds and lakes by unscrupulous collectors, I am sickened.

The American people import staggering numbers of living wildlife. For example, last year our countrymen imported over 100,000 mammals. Approximately 80-90 percent of these were primates--monkeys, apes, and their allies. Most were animals captured in the wild. Very little information concerning the problems or details of the worldwide animals trade is made public, but there are a number of concerned people--including some of the dealers themselves--who are trying to correct this. I'll like to share with you excerpts from a report we received from one such interested party which described a typical primate "pipeline." I quote:

"Handling of these captured animals varies little.....most...are kept in burlap sacks when transported to the village from the countryside....at times half a day's journey by horseback. Exposure....and...deprivation...combined with the shock of being separated from the mother, is the situation with the majority of animals.....The trapper sells the monkey to a store merchant, who resells it to persons who will eventually sell it to an animal dealer...there may be one or two resellings before the... individual finally reaches the depots. The monkey is...again exposed to a drastic change in environment upon arrival at the depot...at this point...most animals have passed through 2 to 4 hands, (and) conditions at the depots...unequivocally fail to meet minimum suitable health conditions. One dealer has a small flame thrower with which he claims to sterilize cages, but I am skeptical of its frequency of usage...Monkeys remain in the dealer's compound from 1 to 6 days...the dealers try to transport them by bulk...whenever possible early in the week in...various versions of confining wire mesh, wooden boxes and the universal burlap bag."

End quote.



The percentage of animals which survive to this point is depressingly low. It is estimated, for example, that nearly four out of every ten marmosets die while trying to negotiate this pipeline. That estimate does not take into consideration the number killed during the capture process. In many species, the adult animals must be killed to enable the capture of the most desirable and salable animals for the trade, the young, thereby resulting in the death of at least one breeding adult for each animal taken.

Putting aside the barbarism of the traffic, the stress on wild animal populations is intolerable and should be unacceptable to the majority of American people. The problems of those who do survive to reach a major trade depot have only begun. Michael Webster, a conservationist in Asia, recently described some of the conditions in Hong Kong, an important wild animals trade center, as follows. Again, I quote:

"Civets being poked with sharp sticks to see if they are fierce enough, monkeys being prodded with live cigarettes, and live wading birds hung up by the legs are all commonplace sights. In terms of suffering, the whole trade is quite horrific. The following account of a visit to one of the main importers just after he had received a consignment may give some idea of the total lack of feeling which the dealers display.

"Outside the shop...an assortment of lethargic wild cats of various species...piled, in individual cages, one on top of the other. They have no water and no food. Further around to the left are about forty masked palm civets in similar cages, with a prospective buyer prodding them with a sharp stick...in the center of the shop is a pile of baskets, each about three feet in diameter and nine inches high. One contains a young Imperial Eagle, unable to stretch its legs, let alone its wings. One contains a Serpent Eagle, another, a large owl. At the back of the shop, the cages are piled even higher. One large cage contains about thirty porcupines. One of these is lying on its back, disembowelled."

Our information indicates Mr. Webster's description reflects conditions commonly encountered in the international wild animal trade today--in 1973. These conditions are examples of inhumanity at its worst!

In 1972, Americans also imported approximately 700,000 birds, over 2-1/2 million reptiles, and over 112 million living fish. The survival rate of these forms, especially birds, is even more shameful than mammals. In the more delicate species, for example, the endangered quetzal, Guatemala's national bird, an estimated 50 died for each one who survived to reach a zoo or pet owner!

And what about exotic pet owners? Is the opinion of a Washington pet dealer that "people want to keep more exotic animals because of the whole interest in nature and ecology" valid, or is the view expressed by Ms. Pressman of your organization that "the typical exotic pet owner is a flagrant exhibitionist who wants to walk down the street and get stopped every five minutes and asked questions about his pet" more accurate?

Irrespective of whether either view is correct or whether the truth lies somewhere between, I feel strongly that it is obvious that the world's wildlife is no longer able to sustain the unregulated exploitation to which it has been subjected for so long. At a time when mammals, the group of animals about which we know the most, are becoming extinct at the rate of nearly one per year, and when we have reason to believe that any other group of animals is faring better, we find the number of wildlife imported into this country zooming upward. Although data are not available, there is no reason to believe the same is not happening in other countries.

We must develop a new ethic, and we must enforce new regulations to end this gruesome business.

I'm sure many of you are aware of the Administration's proposed Endangered and Threatened Species Conservation Act of 1973 now before the Congress. The Senate passed its version of this important legislation in July and last month the House of Representatives passed its version. The bills are in the hands of a capable conference committee which should produce a strong law. Among other things, this bill provides the Secretary authority to regulate the taking of endangered species of native wildlife if the state does not do so. When this authority is provided, roadside zoos will find far fewer species available to use as tourist bait and, if timber wolves are going to be encountered, I predict it will be in the wilds rather than suburban basements.

That bill also will permit us to identify a category of "threatened" animals--those which appear to be heading towards the depths of "endangerment"--and to take action before they literally become threatened with extinction--thus enabling us to use an "ounce of prevention" instead of a "pound of cure." All professional wildlife students know that once a creature is endangered, the road to recovery is very, very painful and difficult.

In addition, we are reviewing our authorities under the so-called "Lacey Act"--a milestone of conservation legislation enacted at the turn of the century. Heretofore our policy under the "Lacey Act" has been to allow relatively unregulated importation of such exotic wildlife



until a species escapes, becomes established in the wild or otherwise proves beyond a shadow of doubt that it is indeed a threat to the named interests. At that point, its name is added to a brief list of so-called "injurious animals" and further importations are prohibited except under permits issued for scientific, medical, educational or exhibition purposes.

Frankly, I feel that procedure, which is curative rather than preventive, has been as effective as closing the barn door after the horse is out.

Several months ago I met with representatives of the conservation community -- some of the persons here today, including Roger Caras, were at that meeting--and announced our intent to revise our policy to strictly control the importation of injurious wildlife. I am delighted to be able to announce that in spite of an incredible number of delays, the proposal soon will be published in the Federal Register and available for public review and comment.

Perhaps the most significant action taken recently toward the regulation of international wild animal trade was the signing in Washington this past March of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora. Over 80 nations participated in the 3-week negotiation of this treaty and already 37, including the United States, have signed. The Senate has given its unanimous advice and consent and the 1973 Endangered Species Act discussed earlier has been modified to implement the convention. It is a lengthy, complex document and is regarded as a very strong international agreement.

Of special interest to your organization is a requirement that all living specimens be "so prepared and shipped as to minimize the risk of injury, damage to health or cruel treatment." We recognize that groups such as the Humane Society of the United States have both a great deal of interest and expertise in this area, and as we proceed with the implementation of the convention, I hope we can rely on your continuing assistance in developing procedures and requirements to meet these criteria.

The implementation of this convention will be a gigantic stride toward removing much of the rust and corrosion in the animal trade pipelines I described earlier.

I have laid out before us a road map which can lead to a much better era of wildlife conservation, one in which man treats his fellow creatures and our shared environment in a rational, responsible manner. I know from experience that this road is neither smooth nor easy--that many bumps, pitfalls and blind alleys lie before us.



I am hereby inviting you to travel this road with our enthusiastic Secretary of the Interior and the dedicated men and women of the Fish and Wildlife Service. Help us avoid the numerous hazards that lie ahead. If, by working together we are able to complete the journey, then there is no doubt in my mind that the world we bequeath to our children will be better than the one we inherited!

The pet dealers, some zoological societies, and the wild animal dealers will all be hard at work to maintain the status quo. I want to change the gruesome pattern of the wild animal trade. I think the vast majority of Americans, if properly informed, would join with us.

Your mission is to point out the abuses, speak out against cruelty, educate the electorate and together we shall help bring about an era when, as a civilization looking back over the years, we can share the triumph of passed legislation, enforcement of rules and the growing realization that millions of young Americans are growing up with a new ethic of treating Mother Earth and all its inhabitants gently, lovingly -- as partners.



October 14, 1974

MEMORANDUM FOR:

DR. FRANK MULHERN
ADMINISTRATOR, APHIS, USDA

FROM:

NORM ROSS

SUBJECT:

Advisory Committee Meeting

Attached is as per our conversation a letter from Mike Sigel listing names of persons outside the panel who could be called upon to participate in the conference.

Please keep me informed on this matter.

Thank you.

Attachment



UNIVERSITY OF MIAMI
MIAMI, FLORIDA 33152
October 4, 1974

Mailing Address:
LABORATORY OF VIROLOGY
DEPARTMENT OF MICROBIOLOGY
SCHOOL OF MEDICINE
P. O. BOX 875, BISCAYNE ANNEX

Location:
MEDICAL ARTS BUILDING
1550 N. W. 10th AVENUE
Telephone:
(305) 348-6567
547

Mr. Norman E. Ross, Jr.
Assistant Director
Domestic Council
The White House
Washington, D. C.

Dear Norman:

The information that the United States Department of Agriculture has agreed to hold a conference by its advisory panel and other experts was most heartening. Your intervention is bound to have a most salutary effect as such a conference should bring out information, recommendations and plans for action essential to the solution of the multifaceted problem. The facets include protection of domestic animals and birds, improvements of procedural elements in the processes of detection and diagnosis, clarification of regulatory aspects including the establishment of a system of confirmatory tests, etc. Above all, all efforts should be made to increase the level of knowledge about the disease, its epidemiology and the role of exotic birds in the epidemiology.

You requested names of persons outside the panel who could be called upon to participate in the conference.

Dr. Frederik B. Bang
Department of Pathobiology
Johns Hopkins University
Baltimore, Maryland 21205

Dr. Theodore Burnstein
School of Veterinary Medicine
Purdue University
Lafayette, Indiana



Mr. Norman E. Ross, Jr.

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October 4, 1974

Dr. L. N. Binn
Walter Reed Army
Institute of Research
Walter Reed Medical Center
Washington, D. C.

Dr. Charles Cunningham
Dept. of Microbiology and Public Health
Michigan State University
East Lansing, Michigan 48824

Dr. D. E. Easterday
University of Wisconsin
School of Veterinary Medicine
Madison, Wisconsin

Dr. Allan Granoff
St. Jude Hospital
Box 318
Memphis, Tennessee 38101

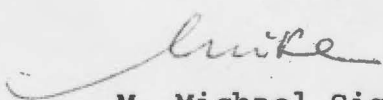
Dr. M. S. Hofstad
Iowa State University
Veterinary Medical Research Institute
Ames, Iowa 50010

Doctors Binn and Burnstein, although not identified with Newcastle disease research, have been active in other areas of veterinary virology.

I would like to recommend two foreign experts on Newcastle: Dr. J. E. Lancaster, Canadian Department of Agriculture, Ottawa, Canada and Dr. J. B. McFerran of Northern Ireland who is presently in this country.

Best regards.

Cordially,


M. Michael Sigel, Ph.D.
Professor



MMS:fs

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, U.S.
WASHINGTON, D. C.

November 25, 1974
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Mr. Norman Ross
The White House
Washington, D.C.

The attached communication is submitted for your consideration, and to ask that the request made therein be complied with, if possible.

~~If you will advise me of your action in this matter and have the letter returned to me with your reply, I will appreciate it.~~

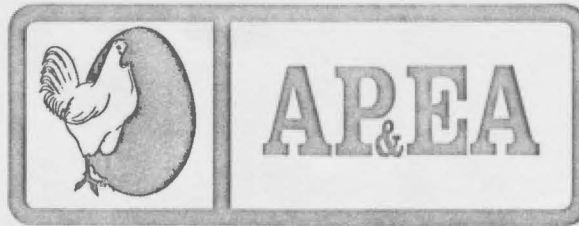
Very truly yours,

Tom Bevill

Tom Bevill

..... 4th of Alabama M.C.

..... District.



ALABAMA POULTRY & EGG ASSOCIATION

P. O. BOX 1010 • CULLMAN, ALABAMA 35055
PHONE (205) 734-3353

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November 21, 1974

The Honorable Tom Bevill
1126 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D. C. 20515

Dear Congressman Bevill:

Within recent months, there has been strong political pressure placed on the U.S. Department of Agriculture to relax the import restrictions on exotic birds. I understand this political pressure is coming from Congressmen from Florida and South Carolina.

Enclosed is a copy of a letter that we sent to Mr. Norman Ross at the White House. With today's inflation rate and the increasing cost of food, we cannot understand the efforts to relax restrictions that could eventually be very costly to U.S. consumers. Exotic Newcastle would virtually wreck the poultry industry until some method for controlling this disease has been developed. Your support of the current USDA position to not relax the import restrictions on exotic birds would be most appreciated. I'm sure a letter from you to Mr. Ross and Secretary of Agriculture Earl Butz in support of the USDA position would be very helpful.

Sincerely,

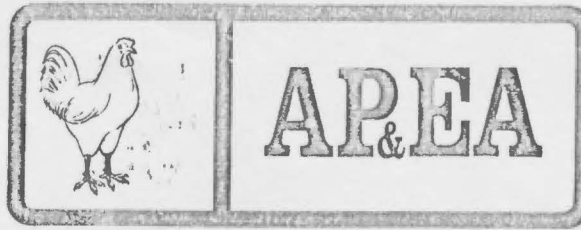
David

David Ozment
Executive Vice President

DO/pw



1126



ALABAMA POULTRY & EGG ASSOCIATION

P. O. BOX 1010 • CULLMAN, ALABAMA 35055
PHONE (205) 734-3353

November 20, 1974

Mr. Norman Ross
The White House
Washington, D. C. 20500

Dear Mr. Ross:

Our members are very concerned regarding recent efforts to relax the import restrictions on exotic birds. The current restrictions are being applied to primarily prevent the outbreak of Exotic Newcastle (VVND) Virus in the United States poultry industry.

VVND first entered the United States approximately two years ago through pet birds exported from other countries. After thorough study, the U.S. Department of Agriculture determined this disease would be very costly to all U.S. consumers if it was allowed to spread across our nation. The U.S. government has spent 56 million dollars in depopulating over 12 million chickens and birds in the United States. The USDA has declared that all areas of the U.S., except Puerto Rico, are not free of Exotic Newcastle. USDA's technical advisory committee has strongly recommended to not relax the current import restrictions on exotic birds.

Our industry is currently having to sell their products at market prices that are below cost of production. However, U.S. consumers, the Administration, and Congress continually urge all agriculture producers in the U.S. to produce an abundance of food at reasonable prices.

We firmly believe it would be a very costly mistake if the import restrictions on the exotic birds were relaxed to allow the possible infection of our industry with Exotic Newcastle. A VVND infested poultry industry would result in significant price increases for poultry and eggs to all consumers.

Again, we urge the Administration to support the U.S. Department of Agriculture in its effort to not relax the import restrictions on exotic birds.

Sincerely,

David Ozment
Executive Vice President

DO/pw



Goodman (202) 447-6315
McDavid (202) 447-4026

NEWS

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

APPEAL CONSIDERED ON COURT ORDER TO RELEASE QUARANTINED BIRDS:

WASHINGTON, Jan. 13--The federal government today announced it is considering an appeal of a U.S. District Court ruling filed Jan. 8 that ordered the release of cage birds being held in an import quarantine facility owned by B.R. Slocum of Miami, Fla. Federal attorney will ask for a stay of execution of the Court's order pending outcome of appeal procedures.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) had refused release of the birds when the virus that causes exotic Newcastle disease was isolated from samples submitted to USDA's diagnostic laboratory in Ames, Iowa.

Mr. Slocum challenged USDA's refusal to release the birds, which have been held in his import quarantine station since June 27, 1974. The case was heard by Judge Peter T. Fay in the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Florida, who on Jan. 8 ordered release of the birds because no clinical signs of disease had been noted in them during the past six months.

USDA regulations require that commercially imported birds be quarantined in a facility approved by USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) for at least 30 days. During this time, APHIS veterinarians test the birds to see if they are free of evidence of disease and thereby eligible for distribution in the U.S. If the agent of exotic Newcastle disease is isolated, USDA requires that an entire shipment either be removed from the U.S. or otherwise disposed of in an acceptable manner.

APHIS issued these bird import regulations in October 1973 to provide a safe means of bringing in birds that otherwise might introduce destructive diseases, such as exotic Newcastle disease, into U.S. poultry flocks.

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All commercial imports of birds had been banned between August 1972 and October 1973 because exotic birds had been implicated in the disastrous exotic Newcastle outbreak in southern California in 1971-1973. That outbreak cost about \$56 million in federal funds to eradicate, and required the destruction of some 11.5 million poultry before the disease was eliminated.

USDA 104-75



USDA 104-75

- note -

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