NEWS

BREACH OF QUARANTINE REGULATIONS

On 12 January quarantine officers, acting under the Commonwealth Quarantine Act, impounded and killed 4 chickens at a residence in Bundaberg, Queensland. The chickens had been hatched from eggs which had allegedly been introduced illegally from Switzerland via Sydney. Preliminary investigations have indicated that no foreign disease has been introduced with the eggs, but further tests were being undertaken.

ABSTRACTS

LOOKING FORWARD

The Editorial 'Looking Forward' in The Veterinary Record of September 1979 made some interesting remarks in reviewing the 30th Annual Conference of the European Association of Animal Production.

The Editorial said that veterinary medicine was well represented at the conference. A relatively small proportion of the sessions were on animal health matters per se, although a gratifyingly large number of participating scientists plainly recognise the essential part that this plays, and will continue to play, in efficient livestock production. In particular, the veterinarian makes a valuable contribution as co-ordinator of the growing number of agricultural technologists whose assistance is available to the animal producer, since fit animals are an obvious pre-requisite to an economically viable enterprise.

The veterinarian has long been concerned with the health of his clients' animals, as an essential factor in efficient production but this interest has seldom had to extend beyond ensuring that they are free of all signs of disease. Problems arising due to suboptimal performance, possibly as a result of physiological rather than pathological influences, have been relatively unimportant. A glimpse into the future, which was provided by the conference suggests that in the future veterinary surgeons in farm animal practice may become more involved with problems caused by animals which are certainly well, but are not as economically profitable as their genetic background suggests they should be. The continually improving health of livestock which we have seen in Britain in recent years lends support to such a theory, as does the fact that veterinary services in some other countries have already moved along those lines. Genetic improvement of livestock continues at a remarkably rapid rate, but all this selective breeding is pointless if the animals are not provided with the nutrition and environment which allows them to fulfil it.

For although they have been, and certainly will be for some years to come, deeply involved in the active prevention and control of active disease in livestock, perhaps veterinarians should not forget this almost embryonic role as providers of guidance on physiological, psychological and ethological aspects of commercial animal production.

ASSESSING POTENTIAL OF RACE HORSES

A total of 45 horses, of six breeds, and one donkey were used for histochemical determination of muscle type. Six muscles from each animal were examined, except in Arabs and quarterhorses, where only the gluteus medius was sampled. Samples were taken post mortem or by biopsy. Preliminary studies showed that small samples gave results comparable to those from larger samples. There were no differences between superficial and deep areas of muscle. The middle gluteal, which is an important organ of propulsion, showed the greatest between-breed difference and correlated well with the type of performance to be expected from the breed: fast sprinters had the most myosin ATPase (pH 9.4) fibres. The authors considered that determination of the muscle fibre composition of the gluteus medius may prove to be an efficient method of assessing the potential performance of young racehorses.

Reference