

Hawaii Environmental Health Association

HEHA HERALD

NOVEMBER 2006



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

The Hawaii Environmental Health Association's governing council is continuing to work very hard in pursuit of HEHA's mission, which is to maintain and promote the highest degree of skill, efficiency and professional competence among professionals practicing the disciplines of environmental health.

Prior to 2004, HEHA organized and co-sponsored an Annual Educational Conference to provide training and education to the environmental health professional. However, past and present HEHA governing council members felt that this was not enough and that HEHA could do more in pursuit of its mission.

Therefore, in 2004 along with the AEC, HEHA organized and co-sponsored a Disaster and Emergency Response Seminar. The goal of this seminar was to expose the health professional to emergency response. Representatives from various Department of Health Branches and state and county civil defense provided emergency response plans and capacities.

Along with the 2005 AEC and 2nd Annual Disaster and Emergency Seminar, HEHA provided yet another training opportunity for the health professional. The 2005 Communication and Investigation Workshop which was held at the Dole Cannery, emphasized communication and investigation skills which is a vital component of today's health professional.

The latest workshop was the 2006 Disaster Response Workshop which was held in September. Dr. Lorrin Pang, Dr. Paul Effler, and Toby Clairmont, who volunteered to help with Hurricane Katrina, presented their experiences regarding the natural disaster. Lynn Nakamura-Tengan shared valuable information regarding home preparedness planning and the environmental management division shared their post disaster concerns regarding drinking water, solid waste, wastewater and clean water. The workshop also included disaster plan implementation exercise for the various environmental health branches.

Still to come is this year's annual educational conference which will be held on December 7 and 8 at the Manoa Grand Ballroom. Some of the topics include; avian flu, farm waste management, restaurant sanitation, and genetically modified organisms. In planning this year's AEC the governing council came to realize that the current conference set up is not able to accommodate all of the proposed topics due to time limitations. Therefore, the mindset for the 2007 AEC is to plan for concurrent sessions. By doing this, we will be able to expand the conference material to the specific disciplines in environmental health.

The HEHA Herald, which is a biannual newsletter, is yet another resource that provides information regarding current environmental health issues, programs, personal experiences, and much more. HEHA is also working to establish a website for the general public and members.

HEHA has come a long way within the past three years. We have provided the health professional with more opportunities to further their knowledge and improve their skills within their careers. The increase in the 2006 membership tells me that more and more people are learning what HEHA is and what it stands for. I would also like to welcome and thank the sixteen new members for their support in HEHA. I want to emphasize that the success of the association is attributed to the governing council, for without their positive attitude and work ethic none of the workshops and conferences would take place and to the members, for without their support, there would be no HEHA.

When I first became president, one of the most common response was "what do I get by joining HEHA?" Well, looking back at the association three years ago and looking at the association today, my response is "you won't get a free toaster or an ipod, instead with your support HEHA will continue to provide invaluable knowledge, education and training for the environmental health professional."

Sincerely,
Eric Honda



www.hehaonline.org

YES, YOUR COMMENTS ARE IMPORTANT.....

Everyone who has attended a workshop, seminar, and conference knows that at the end there is always an evaluation sheet to fill out. I know that at the end of a workshop or conference, completing an evaluation sheet is one of the last things anyone wants to do. People may think, "no one really reads it" or "like my comments actually means anything." YES... people actually read the evaluations and YES your comments are valuable.

Here are just some of the outcomes resulting from the evaluations:

- Different venues for the workshops and conferences have been used such as Dole Cannery, Ala Moana Hotel, King Kamehameha Hotel, and Manoa Grand Ballroom.
- Evaluation forms have provided specific topics of interest for the educational conference.

- Amendments to HEHA's Constitution and Bylaws have been proposed.
- HEHA is expanding its outreach by creating a HEHA website and increasing the newsletter distribution list.
- Future HEHA AEC will have concurrent sessions to address more topics.
- Continue to provide educational opportunities for the environmental health professional.

So, whenever you see an evaluation sheet please take the time to express your opinions and ideas. If it was "junk" tell us, but please tell us why so that any problems can be address and corrected. Like wise, if it was "good," explain to us why it was good so we can continue doing positive things. Just remember, evaluations are tools for improvement.

Is What You See, Really What You Are Getting?

By Lance Wong

Food and Drug Branch

Most of us in Hawaii love to eat fresh tuna fish. Whether we eat it raw in our sushi or poke or cooked, its that cherry-red flesh color that helps us to determine top quality fish. But it has become increasingly likely that the fish is bright red because it has been processed with carbon monoxide or some other color preserving process. The demand for fresh fish and seafood has increased greatly. The seafood industry has been challenged to provide consumers with increasing amounts all year round.

Fresh tuna quickly turns an unappetizing brown whether it is fresh or frozen and thawed. Carbon monoxide, a gas that is also a component of wood smoke, prevents the flesh from discoloring. It can even turn an unappetizing brown looking fish loin into a delectable looking cherry red. Another process treats tuna with "tasteless smoke", which is purified smoke with the taste and odor components filtered out. The seafood industry estimates that 25 million pounds of treated tuna, about 30% of total tuna imports, were brought into the United

States last year, mostly from processors in Southeast Asia. Suppliers and retailers who use the treated fish say the process allows them to sell high-quality, flash-frozen fish that still looks good enough to eat. An important point to remember however is that these types of processes preserves only the color of the fish, not its quality.

In May of 1999, the U. S. Food and Drug Administration issued an import bulletin and a letter to Hawaii seafood processors and importers regarding labeling requirements for the use of carbon monoxide and "tasteless smoke" to preserve imported tuna and other seafood. At the time, the two processes were becoming more prevalent in the industry, and the FDA was concerned about possible unscrupulous manufacturers taking "old" fish and treating it with carbon monoxide to make it appear fresh. There was also great concern from the fresh seafood industry that the public would buy cheaper treated fish and not realize that it was not fresh. As a consumer, look for the following on the label:

» Fish cannot be labeled "fresh"

or "fresh frozen" if it was processed with carbon monoxide, tasteless smoke or other similar preservation process.

» When a product is sold in a packaged form, the label must state the name of the product; what it has been treated with by its common name; and the reason for the treatment, e.g., "ahi tuna, carbon monoxide (preservative to promote color retention)," or "tilapia, tasteless smoke (preservative to promote color retention)."

» The process must be spelled out, i.e. "Carbon monoxide treated" not "CO treated", similarly "Tasteless smoke treated" not "TS treated".

» If fish is sold in bulk, such as with poke, a counter sign or placard must be placed next to the product, with the required labeling information, e.g., "Tombo preserved with carbon monoxide to promote color retention."

» If the fish was previously frozen, it must state that on a label or placard.

For any questions or concerns, call the Food and Drug Branch at 586-4725.



AVIAN INFLUENZA

By Lorie Whitsett
Maui District Health Office

Avian influenza (AI) is on everyone's mind these days. Pick up any newspaper or turn on any news broadcast and you are likely to hear about this dreaded illness that is moving rapidly across the eastern hemisphere. What does it mean for Hawaii, especially with the large numbers of feral chickens roaming our islands?

First of all, be assured that the highly pathogenic strain of AI that is so much of a concern today is not here – not on the U.S. mainland and not in Hawaii. But with the nature of this illness – the fact that it's spread by migratory birds that we have absolutely no control over – the virus will inevitably make its way here. What then?

Is the presence of feral chickens in our neighborhoods going to increase the spread of AI?

No. Those at risk for bird flu are people who have prolonged, consistent contact with birds, usually poultry. Merely having chickens in one's yard or neighborhood is not "prolonged, consistent contact". In the United States and other developed countries, very few people will have the kind of poultry exposure that has led to the illnesses and deaths that we've seen in Asia and Africa. Exposure is considered most likely during slaughter, defeathering, butchering, and preparation of poultry for cooking. Therefore, those at highest risk from the illness are individuals who work in poultry farming, processing and disease control and eradication.

How should we respond to calls or complaints from the public concerning the risk of AI associated with feral (or backyard) chickens?

Remind people that the best way to avoid illness is with

good hygiene, especially handwashing, after handling any animal or bird, their feces, or dirty surfaces like coops, waterers or feed trays. Again, the people who have gotten bird flu from poultry have had very close contact with sick or dying birds. Most people with backyard poultry do not have "prolonged, consistent contact" with the birds and have even less contact with poultry kept by their neighbors. Making sure that manure from the flock kept in out of the way places, and that small children are not alone with poultry or their feces, can reduce accidental contact with disease causing agents of all kinds, not just bird flu.

What about dead chickens?

Remind callers that before handling, they should take precautions to protect themselves from possible exposure to germs. Contact with the bird should be avoided. Some ways of doing this are covering your hand with a plastic bag and inverting it over the carcass. Another way would be to use a shovel or a pair of barbecue tongs to pick up the bird and put it into a plastic bag. In any case, it is important to wash your hands after disposing of the bird.

At this time, there is no agency or program who will collect feral chickens for testing for any illness. The Hawaii State Department of Agriculture is responsible for death or illness of domestic birds, including ducks, geese, swans, turkeys, pigeons, doves, and other game birds, but not including wild poultry.

References:

http://www.who.int/csr/disease/avian_influenza/avian_faqs/en/index.html#present

http://animalscience.ucdavis.edu/Avian/sm_flock.htm

<http://www.cdc.gov/flu/avian/>

HDHO BRT

By Eric Honda

The Hawaii District Health Office (HDHO) Biological Response Team (BRT) was created to provide epidemiological surge capacity and/or to provide public health field response in a biological emergency. BRT field response members include registered sanitarians, vector control inspectors and workers, epidemiology specialists, public health nurses, and microbiologist, lab assistants, . Other supporting members include BT planner, BT-DPSA, HPEO, licensed social workers,



and mental health workers.

The BRT or any portion of the BRT can only be activated by the District Health Officer or the Incident Commander. Activation of the BRT will be in response to a biological incident which requires numerous HDHO resources to effectively combat the emergency. BRT will respond to a pandemic influenza, a possible bioterrorism incident, natural disasters, or a biological incident that exceeds the resources of the local epidemiology program.

The BRT is responsible for identification (collection of specimens, transport, lab analysis), distribution (interviews to determine contacts, follow-up with contacts), prevention (education, treatment with antibiotics, ring vaccinations, isolation, quarantine), and zoonosis eradication.

BRT members are being trained

in biological agents (anthrax, botulism, plague, smallpox, avian influenza), epidemiology, first aid/CPR, personal protection equipment, emergency equipment, NIMS, and other areas that are pertinent to emergency response.

The most recent activation of the BRT was in July of this year during the HDHO Functional Exercise. The functional exercise was based on a pandemic influenza and was designed to be a naturally occurring disease outbreak response.

Responsibilities of the BRT included, establishing and maintaining the Incident Command System, active surveillance of hospitals and medical clinics, and epidemiological field investigations.

NEWS FROM OAHU SANITATION

By Peter Oshiro, Sanitation

During the past year the Oahu Sanitation Branch has been going through many positive changes. We were able to hire three new registered sanitarians (RS) and we hired a new clerk-typist twice. The clerk-typist left us for a better future, then promptly returned after about a week or two because she loved us so much. One of the new RS also left us, but we do not anticipate her return, as she expressed an interest in going back to school to become a Special Ed. teacher. We explained to her that she has all the Special Ed training she could ever hope for at our branch, but she still left us. At the time this article was written, we had interviewed and made selections for two more new RS's, and it was anticipated that they would be on board shortly. Two existing RS positions are still open, which we also hope

to interview for and hire before the end of the year.

Sidney Doi, our Standardization Officer is now the new State Milk Ratings Officer, and Dean Kagawa is the new Milk Specialist. Dennis Loo is administering our Food Handlers Education Program and Gary Hirokane is deeply imbedded with our Deputy AG as our liaison for all legal matters. We are in the process of streamlining our NOV's and enforcement actions in an attempt to make it easier and more uniform for the RS's to take legal action when needed.

Oahu Sanitation staff is slowly entering the information age by having all field staff equipped with PC tablets which hopefully will lead to electronic inspection forms in the near future. The Sanitation program also created and rolled out a new food establishment inspection form that ties the violations observed with the pertinent sections in Chapter 12. This was also done in preparation of our new data base which will eventually be ported

over to our electronic inspection form system of the future. The new procedures created by Sidney Doi, for filling out the form, will also move the statewide sanitation program towards uniformity in conducting food establishment inspections.

Dennis Loo and myself joined five other EHSD employees at the NEHA Annual Education Conference in San Antonio in late June 2006. The conference was very successful and provided a litany of information for the attendees, especially in the area of All hazards preparedness and disaster relief. In late September we also sent Paul Maeda who joined some neighbor island staff and Chief Sanitarians at a Food Safety Education Conference in Denver, Colorado.

I would like to recognize and congratulate both Gary Hirokane and Dennis Loo who were nominated and received the Sustained Superior Performance award from the Director of Health in June 2006.

MAHALO FROM HEHA

HEHA would like to acknowledge the new members of 2006. Thank you very much for your support and participation in the association.

- KYLA TAKAI..... DOH Sanitation
- ROGER AGULLANA..... DOH Sanitation
- CELEST KAKIMOTO..... DOH Laboratory
- DAVID MANGUCHEI..... DOH Vector Control
- REEF NAKASHIMA..... DOH Vector Control
- CALVIN DUARTE..... DOH Vector Control
- LYNN NAKASONE..... DOH Food and Drug
- REX MITSUNAGA..... DOH Sanitation
- DENNIS LOO..... DOH Sanitation
- SIDNEY DOI..... DOH Sanitation
- GLEN NAKAHARA..... DOH Sanitation
- BLAINE SHISHIDO..... DOH Food and Drug
- SANDRA HUNG..... DOH Food and Drug
- DONALD GUERLAND..... FEMA Contracted
- WARRICK AIWOHI..... DOH Vector Control
- DEAN KAGAWA..... DOH Sanitation



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