

Local/State

Disease found in birds

HOUSTON — Animal health investigators Wednesday prepared to destroy several thousand birds at a wholesale dealership where one bird was found to have Exotic Newcastle disease, a threat to poultry flocks. The U.S. Department of Agriculture veterinarians last month killed 552 birds at another local pet store after finding an infected bird. "It's like cutting a firebreak around a forest fire," USDA information officer Don Nielson said. "You must have to remove the fuel." Nielson said USDA officials feared many as 4,000 birds might have to be destroyed after tests confirmed Saturday that a bird at Exotex, a wholesale bird distributor, was infected with the disease.

"There's no way of knowing (how many)," Nielson said. "This place (Exotex) is so big and you can't really count them if they're not standing still. I've heard this is the third largest establishment of this kind in the country."

Exotex owner David Allen said destruction of the birds is "hard to take. I've got pets out there." Allen estimated his loss will be \$150,000. The government has been reimbursing bird dealers whose inventories have been "depopulated."

"I'll have to start over again," Allen said. "I might just not go back into the business."

Allen estimated he has between 4,700 and 6,000 quarantined birds — "everything from finches to macaws"

— and are valued from as little as \$4 each to one bird worth \$7,500.

Allen says the disease came in from California in a shipment of Patagonia conures that turned out to be sick and he shipped them back.

There has been some unhappiness about the government's policy of paying cost plus 10 percent. Allen said cost plus 30 percent would cover freight and feed but would not match expected Christmas prices.

"With cost plus 40 percent, I might come out even," Allen said.

USDA officials say Exotic Newcastle Disease, which can cause flu-like symptoms in humans, can be devastating to chicken flocks, where it causes weakness, listlessness, diarrhea and death.

Entries due in by Saturday

Blood drive keg contest open

Organizations that plan to enter the Aggie Blood Drive Keg Contest need to submit an entry form to the student Government secretary in 16 MSC by Saturday. Matt Woodruff, chairman of the blood drive committee at Texas A&M University, said the contest is the committee's way of showing appreciation to the groups who help make the Aggie Blood Drive the most awesome anywhere.

In addition, Woodruff said the contest is provided as an opportunity for rival groups on campus to channel their competition through a good

cause. He suggested that groups challenge rival groups through a letter to the editor of The Battalion in an effort to increase the interest of group members.

In order to win a keg of beer, a team must donate at least 25 pints of blood during the drive. The team donating the most pints will win first prize of three kegs of beer and a plaque. Second and third prizes, two kegs and one keg, will be determined by a drawing. For the first 25 pints donated, the group gets one entry in the drawing. For each additional five

Low rate loan market approved

By DEBBIE NELSON
Battalion Staff
Low-to-moderate income families at College Station may have a better chance of buying homes after the city council resolved Wednesday to allow county corporation purchase home mortgages at low interest rates. The corporation would be a secondary loan market. People getting mortgages from loan companies would apply to have their mortgages bought by the corporation, which should have a lower interest rate. Bonds estimated at \$20 million will be sold by the corporation to buy mortgages from loan companies. The corporation's lawyer said, "The only project is Uncle Sam — it's tax-exempt bonds that are issued." The corporation had to receive approval of the city to buy mortgages within the city limits. It will also buy mortgages throughout Brazos County.

"If we can drop the interest rate down, hopefully below 11 percent, then we can help some young people to become homeowners," a spokesman said.

Auditor Jerry Simpson said, "We're well on our way with our

audit and looking forward to completion as soon as possible."

Simpson said he has had some problems getting information for the audit, but anticipates the final report at the end of October, when he will suggest future controls and procedure for the city.

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