2020 National Safety Conference for the Poultry Industry Focuses on Reducing Injury Rates and Mitigating Pandemic Threats

TUCKER, Ga. – Aug. 27, 2020 – “I think our industry does not get the credit it deserves. Having worked in many industries, it is clear how much the work of safety professionals impacts the lives of workers in this industry. Other industries have safety risks as well, but poultry workers are constantly exposed to safety risks. As safety professionals, we know that the work we do to keep employees safe is vital,” said Frank Cruice, senior director of corporate safety and security for Perdue Farms and chairman of the Joint Industry Safety and Health Council. Cruice shared his personal experience with working in safety for the poultry industry during his opening remarks at the National Safety Conference for the Poultry Industry, sponsored by the U.S. Poultry & Egg Association and the Agriculture Technology Research Program at Georgia Tech Research Institute. Appropriate safety precautions and protocols were in place at the conference, including face coverings, gloves, sanitizing and six-foot distancing.

The conference included updates from the Occupational Safety & Health Administration (OSHA), the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The updates featured Jessica Schifano, director of the Office of Biological Hazards for OSHA, Larry McGowan from the Office of Health Enforcement, and Dr. Douglas Trout, chief of the Hazard Evaluations and Technical Assistance branch for NIOSH/CDC. COVID-19 was, of course, a topic of discussion during this presentation.

“There can be mixed messages about what safety precautions should be taken, depending on what one facility is doing versus what another facility chooses to do. That’s why it’s so important for all of us to get better information out to the community, to the media and to policy makers. Testing isn’t the only answer to the issues we are facing right now,” commented Dr. Trout.

Dr. Pete VanDerlyke, corporate director of health and safety for Peco Foods, presented a research summary on the “Importance of Leading Indicators to Prevent Injuries,” focusing on research he had performed during his doctoral dissertation detailing exactly how effective leading indicators are in the reduction of injury rates. “Up until now, there has been a lack of research determining which, if any, leading indicators have a higher impact on reducing injury rates. The focus of my research is to shed light on how effective our commonly implemented leading indicators truly are. The goal is to ensure higher levels of safety for workers, and we need to be sure that what we are doing to accomplish that goal is actually working,” explained Dr. VanDerlyke.
During a panel discussion on “Safety Best Practices During a Pandemic...Moving Forward,” Ronnie Franklin, corporate safety coordinator for Fieldale Farms, Frank Cruice and Dr. VanDerLyke shared what their respective companies were doing to mitigate the threat of COVID-19 for their employees. Some of these measures included lessening potential exposure to germs by sanitizing daily, protecting people from possible exposure by using face coverings and dividers in workstation areas, implementing remote work where possible and offering personal protection equipment (PPE) where necessary.

An announcement of the recognition of 215 poultry facilities also occurred during the conference. The facilities were recognized for their outstanding safety performance through the implementation of innovative and effective employee safety and health programs.

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U.S. Poultry & Egg Association (USPOULTRY) is the All Feather Association progressively serving its poultry and egg members through research, education, communications and technical services. Founded in 1947, USPOULTRY is based in Tucker, Georgia.