USPOULTRY Foundation Approves New Board Research Initiative Grant Addressing Blackhead Disease in Poultry

TUCKER, Ga. – May 11, 2020 – The USPOULTRY Foundation approved approximately $120,000 in funding for a new research grant addressing blackhead disease in poultry through the Board Research Initiative program. The topic and request for proposal were selected by the USPOULTRY Foundation board of directors. The Foundation Research Advisory Committee evaluated several research proposals and then recommended which project to fund to the board.

The research grant is as follows, and the research was made possible in part by donations to the USPOULTRY Foundation. The donations were from a wide range of poultry and egg companies, individuals and families to support the Foundation’s mission of funding industry research and recruiting students into poultry careers.

Methods for Preventing Blackhead Disease in Poultry
North Carolina State University (research grant made possible in part by an endowing Foundation gift from Prestage Farms)

A better understanding of blackhead disease and its bird to bird transmission is needed to both improve the testing of alternative products to prevent the disease and identify best management practices to prevent large scale outbreaks. This project will develop and test a new type of vaccine using molecular techniques, as well as identify Heterakis vectors.

"The identification of preventative strategies and treatment options for blackhead disease in poultry is not only an economic need, but an animal welfare imperative," said Dr. Robert Beckstead, Prestage Family Distinguished Scholar in Turkey Physiology, Nutrition and Immunology with the Prestage Department of Poultry Science at North Carolina State University. Dr. Beckstead will be the primary researcher for the research on blackhead disease.

Dr. Denise Heard, USPOULTRY director of research commented, “Blackhead is such an important disease in the commercial turkey and chicken industries. With no effective vaccines to prevent blackhead and no approved treatments on the market, we must rely on novel research to provide innovative strategies to tackle this issue.”

“For several years, the USPOULTRY Foundation has supported a number of projects related to blackhead disease, because of its continuing adverse impact on the turkey industry and the lack of approved proactive measures,” said John Starkey, USPOULTRY Foundation president.

The USPOULTRY Board Research Initiative was created by the boards of USPOULTRY and the USPOULTRY Foundation to address current issues facing the poultry industry. The USPOULTRY Board
Research Initiative operates alongside the USPOULTRY comprehensive research program and augments the great success of the existing program by focusing additional resources toward defined areas of research.

USPOULTRY and its Foundation operate an extensive research program incorporating all phases of poultry and egg production and processing. Since the inception of the research program, USPOULTRY has reinvested more than $32 million dollars into the industry in the form of research grants. More than 50 universities and federal and state facilities have received grants over the years.

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The USPOULTRY Foundation’s mission is to support the recruitment and training of the brightest students, seek and fund scientific research, foster student scientists and promote careers in the poultry and egg industry.