

149

6 MR. CARLIN: My understanding is Dr.
7 Pilkington has arrived. Very good. If you'd be so
8 kind as to come forward. Do we have -- oh, and
9 we've got a slideshow, too.

10 MR. PILKINGTON: We do.

11 MR. CARLIN: And you are chief
12 veterinarian.

13 MR. PILKINGTON: I'm vice president for
14 live production services for Tyson Foods and, yes,
15 I am a veterinarian. Our group encompasses the
16 veterinarians, nutritionists and some technical
17 specialists in hatcheries and females strictly for
18 the chicken side of Tyson's business.

19 What I was asked to give you an overview
20 of today is avian influenza. My understanding is
21 -- the format is I have about ten minutes to speak
22 and about ten minutes to field questions. With
23 that in mind, I only brought six slides, one of
24 which is a title slide and two of which are the
25 exact same, so I think I can get it done.

150

1 MR. CARLIN: Good.

2 MR. PILKINGTON: I'm going to have to
3 work around the pole here.

4 MR. CARLIN: You're not the first one.

5 MR. PILKINGTON: My first slide, this
6 slide and the very last one are the exact same and
7 that's because if you distill avian influenza down
8 everything we've heard of in the last probably
9 mainly two years, but quite frankly this particular
10 virus has been going on longer than that, can
11 really come down to just a few key points. The
12 ones I want you to take away are listed here.

13 First of all, we classify the particular
14 avian influenza we're worried about, we read about
15 in the papers as H5N1. The details about how we
16 classify that are longer than ten minutes, but
17 H5N1 highly pathogenic avian influenza is an
18 animal disease and currently there is not a human
19 pandemic anywhere in the world.

20 It's very important that we keep these two
21 diseases separate. There is one bucket for the
22 animal disease, thus the term avian influenza, and
23 then over here there's the fear of human pandemic
24 which is a completely separate entity. Now, of
25 course, the worry is that the avian influenza

151

1 bucket increases the risks of this one occurring,
2 but the two are not directly related. And I'll touch

3 on that a little more as we go through this
4 presentation.

5 Secondly, as I said, I am from Tyson so a
6 lot of these slides refer to Tyson but I'll also speak
7 for the industry. All the Tyson's flocks and about
8 97 percent of the industries' are currently tested
9 prior to a crew going out and picking them up.

10 And then the third bullet point, you've
11 seen on some web sites, National Chicken Counsel
12 web site and a couple of other prominent ones, the
13 statement that consumers have virtually no chance
14 of encountering poultry meat, and that would be
15 encompassing chicken and turkeys, with avian
16 influenza in it.

17 All of that being said, the fourth point is
18 probably the most important. Normal cooking
19 defined by what you do today or heating this up to
20 165°F kills any flu virus that would happen to be
21 in that product. Okay. I don't know who is
22 driving this, but if you'll advance it.

23 The reason I'm standing here today is
24 really this slide. We would not be discussing this
25 at this level if the avian influenza virus, the H5N1

152

1 highly pathogenic virus, had never made the jump
2 to infect a person. This is a real busy slide. You
3 guys I've provided a copy, so you can certainly get
4 this and study it later, but this comes from the
5 WHO and it is a table detailing all the countries
6 where human cases have been identified by WHO
7 standards.

8 And if you look to the far right and down
9 to the bottom, the case number, if I'm reading it
10 right, is 270. That's as of February. The
11 mortality rate of those cases is over 160, so that
12 comes out to be about 60 percent. That's a big
13 deal and that's why we talk about it because this
14 virus has managed to move from a bird to people.
15 It has done so only when the infected people have
16 been in very close contact with those birds,
17 whether that be cohabitating or even slaughtering
18 and consuming of those birds. But that's the
19 reason we're here and we talk about it today.

20 If you'll move to the next slide, please.
21 We have never had an outbreak of this virus, this
22 H5N1 highly pathogenic AI, not only in the United
23 States, we haven't had it in North America. I will
24 even go on to say we have not had it reported in
25 North America, Central America or South America.

153

1 But certainly the industry I'm associated with and
2 most knowledgeable about, being the U.S.
3 industry, it's never been here. It's not here now.
4 That's very important to remember. This virus is
5 half a world away. That should give us some
6 comfort. I'm not saying we should ignore it, but it
7 should give us some comfort.

8 Also realize this virus has been known for
9 over ten years now. Again, that should give us
10 some comfort. What are we doing, and this does
11 say what is Tyson doing, to protect its flocks? It
12 holds true for the industry at large, but
13 biosecurity is our main weapon against any
14 disease coming into and proliferating our flocks.
15 It certainly applies for avian influenza and
16 certainly we've stepped up biosecurity in light of
17 recent events.

18 The biggest difference in the U.S.
19 industry and the raising standards in poultry in
20 the areas of the world where this virus first
21 proliferated, mainly Southeast Asia, is -- and I
22 think a fair amount of you had a chance to tour
23 some farms yesterday. First of all, our farms are a
24 long ways away from where most people live. Now,
25 I've done this in all of these talks and I know I've

154

1 got a few folks that work in poultry time -- every
2 day, so excluding someone that works for an
3 integrator, who has been, and those of you who
4 visited the farm yesterday, who has been on a
5 poultry farm in the last month?

6 Susan works for the university in poultry,
7 too. I'm getting stumped. That's the first time --
8 and I've got one more. I've got four people out of
9 this room. I will tell you the most I've ever had
10 raise their hand, and I've given a lot of these
11 talks, that's the most. Up until now I've had two
12 people. That would not be the case if I was giving
13 this talk in the areas of the world where this
14 disease proliferated. People would not only say
15 I've been on a farm, they would say I own
16 chickens. In fact, there are some cases where it
17 would be a rare day for you not to encounter yard
18 birds, backyard birds, et cetera. Simply put, the
19 U.S. is not situated -- it does not look the same as
20 these parts of the world.

21 We put our birds on farms that are far
22 removed from our population centers, then we put
23 barriers around those whether they literally be
24 fences or simply large amounts of land. We then
25 put the birds in houses that are enclosed,

1 separated from wild animals and birds and so
2 forth. So that's the biggest, biggest difference.

3 We also, both Tyson and the industry,
4 monitor continuously for a lot of diseases, but
5 we're out monitoring for avian influenza, as I said,
6 in all of our flocks before picking up to go to
7 processing and also in our long live birds, our
8 breeder birds, on a regular basis.

9 If you'll flip to the next slide. And I told
10 you you'll see this slide again. These are the four
11 points I want you to remember. The first is avian
12 influenza is an animal disease. It is not -- there
13 is not a human pandemic.

14 Secondly, all the industry, it says 97
15 percent of the industry, essentially all of the
16 industry tests prior to picking up for slaughter.

17 Thirdly, the chances of anyone in this
18 room encountering avian influenza through poultry
19 meat is remote. And thirdly, even if it was there,
20 as long as it is cooked, again, normal, nothing
21 special, not high temperatures, just 165, which is
22 what everyone has heard from the beginning of
23 food safety talks, 165 would kill it even if it were
24 to be there. I believe that's my last slide and I
25 think I just ran out of my time.

1 MR. CARLIN: Well, first of all, we want
2 to say that thanks to you we're all going to sleep
3 better tonight. We can at least feel comfortable
4 that we won't wake up tomorrow to a pandemic.

5 Mary?

6 MS. WILSON: You mentioned that all of
7 your flocks are tested prior to processing. How
8 many per flock, how soon or how late prior to
9 processing and how is it done, is it serologically,
10 by isolation, can you give us a bit more
11 information about that?

12 MR. PILKINGTON: Yes. All of our flocks
13 are tested, but you raise a good point, which is
14 what is a sample size within a flock? And that was
15 a point -- the number is 11 birds.

16 MS. WILSON: 11 birds --

17 MR. PILKINGTON: 11 birds out of a
18 flock.

19 MS. WILSON: Per 5,000?

20 MR. PILKINGTON: That's right. And I
21 see your eyebrows raising for good reason, except
22 let me back up and say that number was arrived at
23 beginning, I may have my dates a little bit off, but

24 beginning probably three years ago the National
25 Poultry Improvement Plan, which is a cooperative

157

1 plan with USDA, some university experts and so
2 forth starting to debate exactly that, how should
3 we monitor for this disease long before it hit the
4 front page of the USA Today. And they arrived at
5 11 being significant. The reason it's significant is
6 avian influenza is a very quickly spreading
7 disease, so if it gets into a flock, it will spread
8 fast enough that they're comfortable with 11.

9 And your second question was what test
10 do we use. That varies through the industry, but
11 what Tyson uses is a serological test and it is what
12 the industry states is within 14 days of slaughter,
13 so it may be closer but it would not be longer than
14 14 days.

15 MR. CARLIN: Michael?

16 MR. BLACKWELL: I apologize, I missed
17 part of your presentation.

18 MR. PILKINGTON: That's all right.

19 MR. BLACKWELL: But I wanted to have
20 you clarify your comments about pandemic
21 influence really are limited to what might happen
22 to your industry, is that correct?

23 MR. PILKINGTON: Specific to what?

24 MR. BLACKWELL: Concern that we as a
25 nation should have been preparing for the

158

1 possibility.

2 MR. PILKINGTON: My comments are
3 specific to the poultry industry and I know I am
4 not suggesting that we should prepare for
5 pandemic. However, I will go on to say that the
6 reason I think we should prepare is not because
7 this is the one but because pandemic preparation
8 can be carried over into any type of disaster
9 preparedness whether that be flu, tornado,
10 hurricane, et cetera.

11 MR. BLACKWELL: I have a follow-up
12 question. Unfortunately, I could not visit the
13 facility yesterday, as you probably heard. My wife
14 has a bunch of parrots at my house so we were in
15 violation.

16 MR. PILKINGTON: I'm not allowed to
17 have any myself.

18 MR. BLACKWELL: You want to change
19 places? My question actually has to do with the
20 poultry industry has set a real standard for
21 biosecurity. I think that's pretty well understood

22 and generally recognized and veterinarians like
23 yourself had a lot to do with that.
24 For the person who works at that facility
25 and gets exposed at home and not necessarily to

159

1 pandemic influenza in this case but the highly
2 pathogenic AI, what steps do you have in place
3 that would prevent contamination of your product?
4 I mean, you can't possibly test each individual
5 coming in each day, so how is that addressed?

6 MR. PILKINGTON: I think I understand
7 your question to mean how do I protect somewhat
8 like yourself?

9 MR. BLACKWELL: I work in your facility.
10 Last night I encountered the virus. I came in
11 today and I'm coughing all over.

12 MR. PILKINGTON: Well, first of all, I
13 need to point out that all of the things I said prior
14 give me a lot of confidence that that is not
15 occurring and will not occur because of where the
16 virus is because of the fact that the virus has not
17 shown the ability to go from birds to person, back
18 to bird, et cetera. It just hasn't happened.

19 MR. BLACKWELL: But do you know that?
20 Do you have proof of that?

21 MR. PILKINGTON: No. What I'm saying
22 is it has not been shown.

23 MR. BLACKWELL: Okay.

24 MR. PILKINGTON: Okay. We can talk
25 theoretical possibility, but I'm talking about what

160

1 has been known today as fact. Also, we do have in
2 place policy that all of our employees that deal
3 with live birds are aware of and agree to that says
4 you do not have parrots, you do not have backyard
5 birds, you are not in contact with those and if you
6 do run into them there is a quarantine period
7 before you come back. And that was put in place
8 for general disease purposes, but it works really
9 well for this, too.

10 MR. CARLIN: Bernie?

11 MR. ROLLIN: There is a hypothesis
12 floating around that the 1917 pandemic was
13 essentially this virus or something close to it. So
14 I guess I didn't understand you when you said we
15 have no evidence that there was ever a pandemic.

16 MR. PILKINGTON: And if I said that, I'll
17 retract that. What I said is there has never been
18 H5N1 highly pathogenic avian influenza in North
19 America. Secondly, there is not a human pandemic

20 in the world today. Now, yes, there have been flu
21 pandemics in the past. I fully recognize that.

22 MR. ROLLIN: Not just the flu pandemic,
23 though, right? You know more about that than I
24 do.

25 MR. BLACKWELL: No, go ahead, please.

161

1 MR. ROLLIN: Well, I was going to say
2 that there is a suggestion from DNA evidence that
3 it was precisely this virus.

4 MR. BLACKWELL: It's been
5 reconstructed.

6 MR. PILKINGTON: And I would have to --
7 I would have to defer to seeing that, but what I do
8 know is it has not been diagnosed as avian
9 influenza, this virus in North America.

10 MR. BLACKWELL: What they did was
11 they looked at, what was it corpses, and
12 reconstructed the virus by molecular biological
13 methods.

14 MR. PILKINGTON: Okay. I can't speak
15 to that.

16 MR. BLACKWELL: The largest pandemic
17 the world has ever seen, which was 1918, actually
18 it was this virus.

19 MR. PILKINGTON: Right.

20 MR. BLACKWELL: We now know that.
21 That was determined last fall. It was
22 reconstructed using DNA technology and the
23 movement that's being monitored around the world
24 suggests that it's mutating at a similar way that it
25 probably did in the early part of the twentieth

162

1 century. If that does happen, all of us will know
2 it. It's not a Tyson issue. It's an issue for the
3 globe, frankly.

4 MR. PILKINGTON: Certainly, and I can't
5 speculate on the virology between -- among 1918
6 flu. I'm not schooled on that at this time.

7 MR. CARLIN: Tom?

8 MR. HAYES: Thanks for coming today.
9 Two quick things. One, it seemed like when the
10 migrating birds were going to come back from the
11 north pole last year we thought it was pretty much
12 inevitable that we get it.

13 MR. PILKINGTON: Not we all.

14 MR. HAYES: Well, I'm sorry. There was
15 a great body of evidence that people thought that
16 it would probably come back. It doesn't seem to
17 have happened yet. What's your odds, and sort of

18 a quick question on we got a paper today that
19 suggests that backyard flocks are actually less
20 risk than large commercial flocks, have you seen
21 that paper?

22 MR. PILKINGTON: I don't think so. Let
23 me start with the first one. Certainly there was a
24 lot of worry because of migratory fly-aways that
25 were common between the parts of the world that

163

1 we've talked about it and, quite frankly, where we
2 are right here and those birds commingling up in
3 Alaska, et cetera, that we needed to monitor those
4 birds. And you're right, nothing was found.

5 You could feel this room and divide it in
6 half and one half would be those that are
7 surprised by that and one half would be those
8 saying I told you so. Which are right, I'm not
9 going to speculate. I don't have odds. I don't
10 have odds on whether it will happen next year, but
11 I do take comfort in a lot of sampling was done. It
12 was not found and the birds are not flying -- are
13 not commingling up there right now. Your second
14 question, I don't know which article you're
15 referring to.

16 MR. HAYES: That's okay. I will send you
17 a copy. It's evidence based policy for controlling
18 high path AI in poultry vials. It's a look at
19 Thailand and the sampling process and the
20 statistical significance of big flocks, which we saw
21 yesterday, versus small backyard flocks and they
22 say that the big flocks are more susceptible than
23 the small flocks are, which seems to be
24 counterintuitive to what you say.

25 MR. PILKINGTON: And I would say,

164

1 having the short time to think about it, that is
2 counterintuitive to me especially when you
3 consider two things. One, most of the cases that
4 we've seen in the world have not been in what we
5 would call commercial birds, at least the way we
6 know them. Again, most of those cases.

7 And secondly, when you just look in the
8 United States of other avian influenzas that are
9 found, I'm talking about low path and so forth,
10 more of those are found in noncommercial birds
11 than what you will see in commercial. So you're
12 right, it seems counterintuitive.

13 MR. CARLIN: David?

14 MR. ANDREWS: Well, it appears that
15 you're chasing out fear with a lot of clarity and I

16 wonder whether there's enough warrant for all that
17 clarity. I do appreciate the attempt to deal with
18 overcoming fear. The recent problem in England
19 was the commercial turkey.

20 MR. PILKINGTON: Yes, it was.

21 MR. ANDREWS: And I've been in lots of
22 urban areas, cities like New Orleans and
23 Albuquerque, where I've spent a period of time
24 where there are chicken flocks right outside urban
25 doors, so while maybe a lot of people in this room

165

1 haven't been near flocks, a lot of consumers
2 actually all over the country do live in such
3 circumstances and whether the backyard chicken
4 is the problem or the commercial is the problem, I
5 think there's enough evidence to suggest that too
6 much clarity doesn't necessarily help us deal with
7 some of the dimensions of the problem that exist.

8 MR. PILKINGTON: I would respectfully
9 disagree to that. I think there is far more of the
10 hysteria and the, let's say, media driven fear such
11 that there is no amount of clarity that would be
12 too much. And I do recognize there are plenty of
13 cities that have birds in them, I mean, Key West,
14 et cetera, but those populations don't tend to
15 cohabitate with those birds in the manner that
16 most of the areas where these diseases are
17 occurring have actually had outbreaks.

18 MR. CARLIN: Mary, this will be the last
19 question.

20 MS. WILSON: It's actually not a
21 question. I just want to clarify something that
22 was said earlier and that is the virus that caused
23 the 1918, 1919 pandemic, all of the genes -- I
24 mean, they were able to show with the
25 reconstruction that all of the genes did come from

166

1 avian species, which was one of the reasons for
2 such consent, but it was actually the H1N1. It
3 was not identical to the virus we have seen today,
4 but it was -- all the genes were from avian species.

5 MR. PILKINGTON: Thank you. Then I'll
6 stand by my earlier statement.

7 MR. CARLIN: Thank you, sir.

8 MR. PILKINGTON: Thank you.