

Guardsmen Complete Short Course at University of Arkansas, Will Teach Basic Poultry Production to Afghan Farmers

Photo Caption: Dr. Dustan Clark, interim associate center director of extension and extension veterinarian at the Center of Excellence for Poultry Science, identifies for Major Doug Christerson various organs in a chicken during a necropsy session. Major Christerson's national guard unit was learning to identify several causes of disease in poultry.

FAYETTEVILLE, Ark. – Poultry scientists in the University of Arkansas System's Division of Agriculture recently taught poultry production basics to a National Guard agricultural development team headed to Afghanistan.

Soldiers from the 1-45 Agricultural Development Team of the Oklahoma National Guard attended a Poultry Production Short Course July 29. The guardsmen will be deployed to Afghanistan in October and will train Afghan farmers on raising poultry as a food source.

The Unit, led by Major Doug Christerson, attended the 8-hour short course to learn a variety of information and techniques regarding the basic anatomy of the chicken, the recognition, treatment and prevention of common diseases, bird nutrition, breeder management, and managing small flocks.

“This team will face many challenges in their mission,” said Dustan Clark, interim associate center director of extension and extension veterinarian at the Center of Excellence for Poultry Science, as well as organizer of the short course. “It is a religious taboo for men to teach women in Afghanistan and women are the ones who care for livestock and poultry. This unit has four women and they will do the actual training.”

Other challenges the unit may face include illiteracy among those they are training, language barriers, rudimentary equipment (at best) and security for the farmers.

“The country is still at war and is suffering from a 12 year drought, in addition to over 40 years of war and unrest,” said Clark.

The training of the locals will take place at a university as well as in villages in the surrounding areas. Those trained at the University will return to their homes and pass what they learned about basic poultry production to others in their area and so on.

Lectures and demonstrations were conducted by university poultry faculty and included Susan Watkins, extension poultry specialist; Keith Bramwell, extension reproductive physiologist; Dustan Clark, interim associate center director of extension and extension veterinarian; Nick Anthony, professor of poultry breeding and genetics; and Anne Fanatico, research associate with the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Poultry Production and Product Safety Research Unit. Josh Payne, area animal waste management specialist for the Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service – Oklahoma State University, also lectured on the value of litter as a fertilizer.

The poultry science department and the Center of Excellence for Poultry Science include a complex of teaching, research and extension facilities at the Arkansas Agricultural Research and Extension Center and the John W. Tyson Poultry Science Building on campus. The department provides the curriculum for B.S., M.S. and Ph.D. degree programs.

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