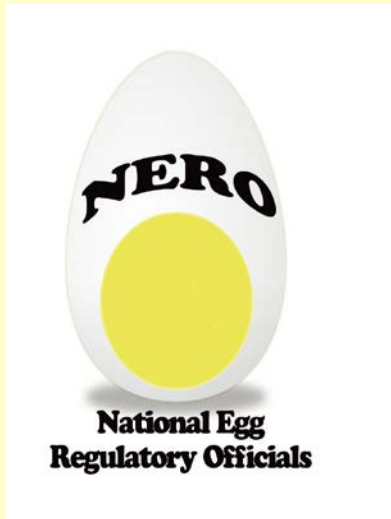


# NERO Newsletter

ISSUE #1 JULY 2014



## Who We Are

The National Egg Regulatory Officials (NERO) consists of State Department of Agriculture officials; that regulate shell eggs and egg products, with the primary objective to promote uniform standards for quality, safety, labeling and handling of shell eggs and egg products that ensure a safe, fresh and truthfully marketed egg supply to the consumer. NERO continues to have a strong working relationship with FDA, USDA/AMS, USDA/ARS, FDA/CFSAN and industry, as all of these were represented at the NERO 22nd Annual Conference and Training Seminar held in St. Charles, Missouri on March 2-5, 2014.

## The 22nd Annual Conference and Training Seminar

The 22nd Annual Conference and Training Seminar included many presentations from representatives of federal agencies and industry, along with committee meetings. The topics covered at the conference included:

\*State roll call reports were read and discussed which updates everyone on the state's current contracts, grading programs, current case fee, any changes with their state egg law, program changes, and if repacking was allowed.

\*We discussed the drastic changes to the new NERO website.

\* Jason Julian, Assistant National Supervisor/Shell Eggs with USDA/AMS/LPS, Quality Assessment Division, Standards Branch gave an update.

\*Oscar Garrison, Director of Food Safety with United Egg Producers gave an update on UEP's recent activities.

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*The 22<sup>nd</sup> Annual  
Conference and  
Training Seminar was  
held in St. Charles,  
Missouri on March 2-5,  
2014*

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*The Topics covered at  
the Conference*

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## The 22nd Annual Conference and Training Seminar (cont.)

\* Paul Buisman with Diamond Moba Americas gave an update on the latest technology pertaining to shell egg grading machines and egg breaking machines for further processing.

\* Jacinta LeDonne, Director of State Programs with American Egg Board gave an update on their recent activities.

\* National Egg Quality School Update presented by Danny Hughes, NEQS Coordinator.

\* History of NERO & Look back at past NERO Conference's presented by Suzanne Moss.

\* Dr. Darrel Trampel, Poultry Extension Veterinarian at Iowa State University spoke on infectious disease, egg quality and Avian Influenza.

\* Members of NERO that have cooperative agreements with the USDA to provide shell egg grading services conducted a Shell Egg Plant USDA Sampling Survey to determine what is the average number of cases per sample and maximum of the survey were discussed. USDA is looking into a pilot program, with some of the plants quality control samples to count as part of the USDA required samples.

\* Dr. Gerardo Ramirez with FDA/CFSAN gave an update on the activities and findings upon implementation of 21CFR118 "Prevention of SE in Shell Eggs during Production, Storage, and Transportation" and the next steps in the implementation of 21CFR118.

\* Deana Jones, Ph.D. Research Food Technologist with USDA/ARS Egg Safety and Quality Research Unit gave an update on their research findings this past year.

\* Barbara Cassens, Senior Advisor for Federal State Relations/FDA gave an update on Federal/State Relations & FSMA

\* Discussion of issues related to federal programs, reaching consensus and responding to the appropriate federal agency.



NERO Officers – (front row from left) Lucy Severs- Treasurer-Washington, Eric O'Kelley- Director-Georgia, Suzanne Moss- Secretary-Illinois (back row) Sarah Schwab-President-Oregon, Richard Hoyle-Past President-North Carolina, Bryan Buchwald- Vice President-Oklahoma

## The 22nd Annual Conference and Training Seminar (cont.)

\*Discussion on the USDA AMS proposal for alternative grading programs for shell egg plants running shielded product was continued.

a. One topic of discussion was related to the recent bad weather and how that impacted the grading service at plants in the Eastern United States. Since states with agreements utilize state government employees, how does a Government closure due to inclement weather impact state personnel? Are the employee classifications considered to be essential personnel or are the programs opening themselves up to liability? Does a grading program have a continuity of operations plan in case of a natural disaster or Government closure? UEP indicated that they were working with USDA on a Notice to Industry that address the USDA position on utilizing QC samples to make up for grading missed due to weather related issues. It was requested that UEP share the information with NERO once the document is finalized.

b. Additionally, we had a discussion relative to what criteria would be utilized by USDA to determine when additional grading personnel would be required under the existing grading program and the proposed alternative program. We would recommend that USDA establish some quantifiable threshold, such as FTE's as determined by sampling workload, so that federal and state personnel, as well as, the plant management has a defined threshold.

\*Sample graded – only samples stamped. Richard Hoyle wrote a letter to USDA outlining the concerns. Changes recommended by NERO have been approved by USDA.

\*Cooperative agreements – State trust, Federal trust for poultry and egg grading; Surveillance; meat grading – Working on a generic template – eventually will be same format across all of AMS. Since they are redoing all of the agreements now – it would be a good time to bring up NERO member concerns again.

\*SES definition of Grading Station: Packing eggs from another producer – grading station regardless of number of eggs handled. Must be registered and inspected quarterly.

\*Retail repacking – incidental repacking – not required to be registered. Need to determine if it is a regular retail activity. If so, they must be registered and inspected quarterly per the EPIA.

### The 22nd Annual Conference and Training Seminar (cont.)

\*FDA Egg Inspections – Conference call – primary issues – complexity of the bid process and information about how and when they will contact the remaining 30 states that have not been offered the opportunity to bid on performing the inspections.

\*Discussed the multiple FSMA rules – recommend NERO monitor the progress and requirements of Preventive Controls, Food Defense, Transportation as they relate to shell eggs and comment as necessary.

\*Discussed California's labeling requirements.



### Update on NERO's conference call with FDA

NERO has provided FDA their concerns/suggestions regarding the SE Egg Rule. Dr. Gerardo Ramirez has reviewed and discussed our comments with the group of individuals he works with. Mr. Ramirez is in the process of meeting with upper management to discuss these items. We hope to be able to have a conference call with FDA in the near future.

### Retirement Congratulations

On July 11, 2014, Roger Glasshoff, National Supervisor of Shell Eggs, retired from the USDA/AMS with over 40 years of government service. Throughout his career, Mr. Glasshoff has worked with the egg products industry under the Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS), USDA and the table egg industry under the Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS). Mr. Glasshoff has been a key speaker at our annual conference and training seminary and a great resource for our organization.

## History of NERO

The National Egg Regulatory Officials (NERO) was created in 1993 with the primary objective to promote uniform standards for quality, safety, labeling and handling of shell eggs and egg products that ensure a safe, fresh and truthfully marketed egg supply. NERO conducts various activities to meet this objective. Industry issues related to uniformity are addressed by both NERO's Board and the full membership. Members of NERO develop stronger and more uniform state programs by learning from each other and the educational components of the Annual Conference and Training Seminar. Our membership discusses issues related to federal programs, reaches consensus and responds to the appropriate federal agency with our position. The various NERO Committees develop recommendations for egg regulations and policies. The full membership votes on these recommendations which are then issued as the model for all state egg laws. Our members then strive to incorporate these models into their state's program.

NERO consists of State Department of Agriculture officials involved in shell egg and egg product regulations and programs and affiliate members with an interest in these programs. If you are not a member of NERO won't you consider joining? Please contact us if you are interested!

## 23<sup>rd</sup> Annual Conference 2015



Site of 2015 NERO Conference

Plan on joining us for our 23rd Annual Conference and Training; NERO's 23rd Annual Conference and Training Seminar will be February 15-18, 2015 in San Diego, CA at the Embassy Suites San Diego Bay-Downtown. Please make hotel reservations for our conference in San Diego by calling 619-239-2400 ext. 1 when you call please let them know you are with the National Egg Regulatory Officials. We have rooms blocked out for the nights of February 14-19, 2015. **Reservation deadline is January 24, 2015!** More information on NERO can be found on our website at [www.nerous.org](http://www.nerous.org)