

reduced the size of the quarantined areas in Nevada and Arizona, leaving only portions of La Paz County, AZ, and Clark County, NV, as quarantined areas in those States.

- In an interim rule effective June 5, 2003, and published in the **Federal Register** on June 11, 2003 (68 FR 34779–34781, Docket No. 02–117–8), we reduced the size of the quarantined areas in Texas and eliminated the quarantined areas in New Mexico, leaving only a portion of El Paso County, TX, as a quarantined area in that State.

- In an interim rule effective July 30, 2003, and published in the **Federal Register** on August 4, 2003 (68 FR 45741–45745, Docket No. 02–117–9), we eliminated the last remaining quarantined areas in Arizona, Nevada, and Texas and reduced the size of the quarantined areas in California, leaving only portions of Kern, Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino, and Ventura Counties, CA, as quarantined areas in that State.

#### *Additional Reductions in Quarantined Areas*

In this interim rule, we are eliminating the last remaining quarantined areas in California. The portion of Orange County that we are removing from quarantine is an area in which END has not been found, but which was included in the quarantined area due to its proximity to areas in adjoining counties where END-positive premises were found. Our actions with respect to Kern, Los Angeles, Riverside, San Bernardino, and Ventura Counties—areas that had, at one time, contained infected premises—are based upon our determination that the areas in those counties meet the criteria contained in § 82.14 of the regulations for release from quarantine. Our basis for these actions is discussed in greater detail below.

#### *Areas in Which END Has Not Been Found*

No END-positive premises were detected in Orange County, CA. Surveillance and testing of poultry premises was carried out in this area and resulted in no END-positive premises being detected.

**Noncommercial premises.** An inventory of at-risk noncommercial premises was developed for the areas targeted for quarantine release. In addition to information previously collected through eradication activities, sources of information included local animal control authorities, local law enforcement, county agricultural

officials, extension personnel, and animal welfare workers.

Surveillance efforts were concentrated in areas that had at-risk premises. An at-risk premises was defined as a premises inhabited by poultry or ratites or that contained an aviary. Within this population, premises considered highest risk were targeted for sampling. High risk premises were defined as any premises with any galliform birds (chickens, turkeys, pheasant, quail, partridge, guinea fowl, pea fowl, etc.), columbiform birds (pigeons, doves), or anseriform birds (ducks, geese, swans). Other factors considered indicative of high risk were multiple owners on the same premises, premises with sick or dead birds, history of movement of birds, and possible contact with an infected premises.

The sampling period for the small portion of Orange County, CA, that had remained under quarantine was from July 20 through August 20, 2003. A total of 5 at-risk premises were sampled from a population of 48 at-risk premises in the area. None of the samples yielded a positive result.

**Commercial premises.** No commercial poultry premises were located in the Orange County, CA, quarantined area.

As noted previously, the regulations in § 82.3(a) provide that any area where birds or poultry infected with END are located will be designated as a quarantined area, and that a quarantined area is any geographical area, which may be a premises or all or part of a State, deemed by epidemiological evaluation to be sufficient to contain all birds or poultry known to be infected with or exposed to END.

APHIS epidemiologists have evaluated the results of the investigations conducted in Orange County, CA, and have determined that we may now eliminate the quarantined area in that county. This determination is based on, among other things, the demonstrated absence of birds or poultry infected with or exposed to END in that area. The regulations in § 82.14 provide requirements that must be met before an area may be removed from quarantine, but those requirements relate to measures taken with respect to END-infected or -exposed birds and poultry, their eggs and manure, and articles and premises with which such birds or their manure or litter have come in contact. As there were no END-infected or -exposed birds or poultry in the portion of Orange County, CA, that has been under quarantine for END, there are no requirements under § 82.14 that need to be met before that area can be removed from quarantine.

#### *Areas That Contained Infected Premises*

An area where END-positive premises have been detected is known as an “infected area.” The infected area in California had a total of 920 END-positive premises, 900 of which were located in Kern, Los Angeles, Riverside, San Bernardino, and Ventura Counties. (The remaining 20 END-positive premises had been located in San Diego County, CA, which we released from quarantine in our August 4, 2003, interim rule.) Fourteen of those 900 premises were commercial poultry premises. All birds on all infected premises, and any premises exposed to those infected premises, were depopulated. The date of depopulation on the final END-positive premises in each county still under quarantine in the infected area of California was:

- Ventura County: April 9, 2003;
- Kern County: May 12, 2003;
- Riverside County: May 20, 2003;
- San Bernardino County: May 22, 2003; and
- Los Angeles County: June 1, 2003.

Intensive surveillance and testing of both noncommercial and commercial poultry premises was carried out in the infected area and resulted in no additional END positive premises being detected.

**Noncommercial premises.** An inventory of at-risk noncommercial premises was developed for the infected area. Surveillance efforts were then concentrated in portions of the infected area that had at-risk premises. An at-risk premises was defined as a premises inhabited by poultry, ratites, or an aviary. Within this population, premises considered highest risk were targeted for sampling.

In the infected area of Kern, Los Angeles, Riverside, San Bernardino, and Ventura Counties, CA, all of the sampling was conducted during the period from June 15 through August 20, 2003. The majority of the sampling was conducted during the period from July 5 to August 9, 2003. Overall, a total of 4,544 at-risk premises were sampled from a population of 22,745 at-risk premises in the infected area. Over 57,500 birds were sampled and tested for the END virus. None of the samples yielded a positive result.

TABLE 1.—AT-RISK NONCOMMERCIAL PREMISES SAMPLED BY COUNTY IN CALIFORNIA

County	Number of premises sampled
Kern .....	56