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FLOOR DEBATE

April 25, 2003      LB 160, 180

This amendment comprises LB 180 as advanced by the Agriculture Committee. It had a full hearing this spring. It was introduced to legally recognize a process, the processing of whole poultry carcasses into a product known as hydrolyzed whole poultry. This is a relatively new rendering practice of poultry carcasses, and holds considerable promise in addressing carcass disposal problems that face commercial egg producers in the state. Each year, there are an estimated seven million spent hens in Nebraska and disposal of such birds is a very serious problem for commercial egg producers due to the fact that available disposal methods are decreasing in the state. The hydrolyzation process employs enzymes, heat and agitation to speed the digestion of poultry carcasses that are first ground and then held in liquid suspension during digestion. The enzymatic process help reduce pathogens and results in a dough-like slurry that is processed into an animal feed product. One of the important innovations of the hydrolyzation process is that it can be used to immediately process spent hens on the farm within minutes of "euthanization." The carcasses can be ground up and immediately incorporated into sealed trucks to be transported back to a licensed rendering establishment to begin the rest of the process. There are "biosecurity" advantages of this method of carcass collection. The birds are processed within minutes of death before pathogens begin multiplying. The animals are carried in sealed containers that limit the opportunity for airborne diseases to be spread by rendering trucks moving from farm to farm carrying whole carcasses. Now, during the hearing on LB 180 there was some confusion regarding how the process worked. Most of the opposition stemmed from the mistaken belief that the enzymatic decomposition was the end of the process, and that's not true. Opposition witnesses rightly stated that enzymes alone are unproven as a means of neutralizing pathogens and rendering the product safe as a livestock feed. It was pointed out that feed products derived from processed carcasses should be subjected to heat as the most certain method of pathogen elimination. This amendment deals with that concern. Now I believe the Agriculture Committee amendments to LB 180 are prudent and responsive to the testimony heard on the bill. This amendment would do several things. In fact, you'll note that the two rendering companies appeared in opposition to the bill, and we have received letters from both