

14. - BACKFLOW AT A POULTRY FARM

DATE OF BACKFLOW INCIDENT: June 1991

LOCATION OF BACKFLOW INCIDENT: Casa, Arkansas

SOURCE(S) OF INFORMATION:

- Pacific Northwest Section of the American Water Works Association, Summary of Backflow Incidents, Fourth Edition, 1995
- Watts Industries, Inc.; Watts Regulator News/Stop Backflow

CASE HISTORY

During the week of June 23, 1991, residents near a poultry farm in Casa, Arkansas, became concerned when their water appeared discolored. In response to complaints from one water customer, it was discovered that the public water system had been contaminated by backflow from a chicken house at the poultry farm.

Both the public water system and an auxiliary water well supplied water to the plumbing in the chicken house. The water service connection from the public water system to the chicken house included two single check valves in series for backflow prevention. Workers were using the water in the chicken house to administer an antibiotic solution to the chickens.

When the Casa water system manager became aware of the problem, the manager shut off water service to the chicken house and flushed the public water main serving the area. He later removed the water meter serving the chicken house until a proper backflow preventer could be installed.

The feeding of antibiotic solutions and live virus vaccines into water to treat and immunize chickens is a popular practice at poultry farms. Such antibiotic solutions could cause severe adverse effects in humans who are hypersensitive to the drugs, and most of the virus vaccines used to immunize chickens are pathogenic to humans.

Therefore, poultry farms should be considered a significant health hazard to public water systems, and a reduced-pressure principle backflow-prevention assembly should be installed at the water service connection to each poultry farm.