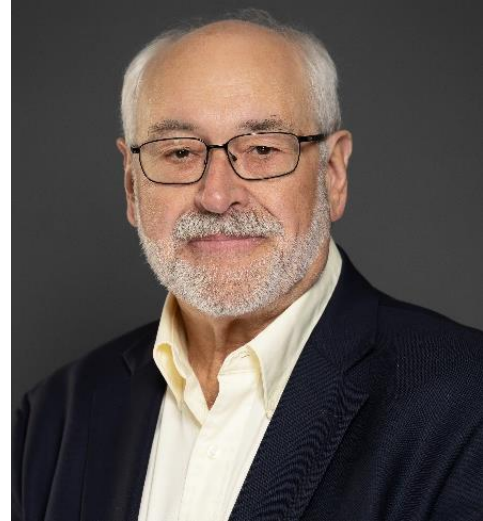


American Association of Avian Pathologists
Biographies of Professionals in Poultry Health

Eric Gingerich

1951 -

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Date: May 2025



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The Life of Eric Gingerich

Early Life:

I was born in Goshen Indiana on November 17, 1951, to my parents, Eli and Rosalee Gingerich. My Dad worked for Pine Manor Inc., an integrated turkey company at the time that eventually changed to chickens in the early 1970's and changed the name to Miller Poultry. Dad raised turkeys himself on rented pasture for the company as we lived in town. He brought 10, day-old poults home from the hatchery one day in the Spring of 1956 when I was 5 years old for me to raise. I started them in the basement of our home then moved them into an old chicken house with an outdoor pen on our property. All ten made it to marketable age then we placed them in coops and sent them to the Pine Manor processing plant. My Dad paid me \$10 for raising them and I was hooked – raising poultry can be rewarding and profitable. We moved to an 80-acre farm southwest of Goshen when I was 8 years old where we raised turkeys, a few hogs, and a few beef cattle. I became quite interested in veterinary medicine during our local veterinarian's visits to treat our livestock. I showed purebred Hampshire pigs for 9 years in 4-H at the Elkhart County Fair obtaining stock from my uncle Pat who was a purebred Hampshire breeder. I showed two of our turkeys at the Fair one year and am embarrassed to say I took turkeys that had breast blisters causing me to get a red "B" ribbon rather than the blue "A" ribbon. I was also exposed to laying hens at my grandparents' farm in Missouri, a small flock, and two of my uncles' cage farms in Indiana and Missouri that were 10,000 in size, big for that era. I remember one year our flock of turkeys had increased mortality and I was tasked with driving them to a vet

practice in Milford Indiana to Drs. Ostendorf and Zehr where they diagnosed erysipelas. We ended up injecting all of them with erysipelas bacterin and penicillin. I was impressed that the mortality decreased abruptly afterward. I was also intrigued while watching a crew slit the sinuses of all the birds in one of our flocks that had infectious sinusitis (Mg) and flush them with tylosin solution.

Schooling:

After graduation from Goshen High School in 1970, I enrolled into the College of Agriculture at Purdue University in pre-veterinary medicine starting there in the fall of 1970. Following an unsuccessful attempt to be accepted into veterinary school after my second year, I was successful after my third year of pre-vet studies and entered the Purdue University College of Veterinary Medicine in the fall of 1973. During veterinary school, I was known as the poultry guy as everyone knew I had a poultry farm background. Toward the end of my second year in veterinary school, Fred Hoerr, a soon-to-be senior student in the class ahead of me, asked if I would be interested in taking over his job in Dr. Roland Winterfield's laboratory helping Drs. Winterfield and Aly Fadly with their research projects and diagnostic duties. I told him I would and spent the next summer and my third year in vet school assisting in the lab. Dr. Winterfield asked me to perform comparative serum neutralization tests on an infectious bronchitis virus he had isolated from an Indiana flock and write a Poultry Science manuscript as head author titled "Variant Infectious Bronchitis Virus Isolated from Indiana Chickens". As advised by Fred Hoerr, during my senior year, I did two months for my required externship at Central Soya Co. in Athens GA tutored by Drs. Dan Wenger and Birch McMurray. That externship led to an interview for a poultry technical services vet job for Central Soya. I was offered a position and accepted it starting my career in poultry medicine in June 1977.

Veterinary Career:

□ Central Soya Co., June 1977 to April 1982.

When I started with Central Soya in 1977, there were nine poultry veterinarians on staff. Central Soya was an integrated broiler producer (top 5 in the US), egg producer (top 10 in the US), and turkey producer (top 10 in the US) plus a commercial poultry feed supplier. They were quite organized in their efforts to prevent diseases complete with their own poultry health management guides so it was a great learning experience. I was eventually assigned as the veterinarian-in-charge for one of the five broiler operations, all five layer operations, and the turkey operation. Dr. Dan Wenger was in charge of veterinary services and taught us all the importance of follow-up trip report writing. Other significant mentors there were also Drs. Al Dietzel, Birch McMurray, and Tom Bryan. I also had the opportunity to work alongside Dr. Kenton Kreager who joined Central Soya a year after I did. I had the distinction of taking Kenton on his first trip to a layer farm.

□ Arkansas Livestock and Poultry Commission Diagnostic Laboratory, Springdale AR, July 1982- October 1983. Due to downsizing at Central Soya, I ended up taking a job at the poultry lab in Springdale AR working under Dr. Hashim Ghori who was located in Little Rock. I received many cases of broilers, layers, and turkeys and seeing a plethora of disease issues. After a little over a year, Kenton Kreager called me about an opening at DEKALB Poultry in DeKalb Illinois where he ended up after both of us being let go from Central Soya in April 1982.

□ DEKALB Poultry Research, October 1983 to June 2000.

DEKALB Poultry Research was a leading egg layer primary breeding company starting in the 1940's. In the 1980's, it was estimated to have a 40% market share of the day-old egg-type chick market. One of my first assignments at DEKALB was to give presentations to our sales staff on highly pathogenic H5N2 avian influenza that had reared its ugly head in October of 1982 in Pennsylvania. I had to rely on study of my textbooks to gather information for these presentations as this was a new disease to most of us. Dr. Kenton Kreager was my boss for my first year before he left to head up the vet services department at Hy-Line, our major competitor. Dr. Gary Waters had left Hy-Line and joined DEKALB as head of veterinary services. Working as a technical services veterinarian for a primary breeder gave me, as a poultry veterinarian, the opportunity to broaden my expertise to not only health management, but also bird management, welfare, and nutrition. While at DEKALB, I had the great experience of working with some of the top veterinarians in the industry, Drs. John Brown, Doug Anderson, Martin Smeltzer, and Armando Mirande. Started by Dr. Reed Rumsey while he was head of technical services at DEKALB, we organized and sponsored two, 2 ½-day customer meetings a year in DeKalb IL, with 20 to 40 customers attending each, where we educated flock managers, owners, and allied industry persons on flock management, health management, and nutrition for egg layers. Since I was employed at DEKALB Poultry for 17 years, I participated in about 34 of these meetings. These meetings gave me the incentive to continually search for new information to add to and improve the presentations. As DEKALB supplied layer breeding stock worldwide, I was able to travel to 28 different countries during my employment there.

□ University of Pennsylvania New Bolton Center (NBC) Poultry Diagnostic Lab, July 2000 to May 2010.

Following the bankruptcy of DEKALB Poultry at the end of May 2000, I was able to find employment relatively quickly by taking a job as a diagnostic lab veterinarian at UPenn working for Dr. Bob Eckroade. I eventually worked under Dr. Sherrill Davison after Dr. Eckroade retired in 2003. During this time at UPenn, I had the opportunity to hone my skills of reading histopath slides with much help from the head pathologist at NBC's PADLS (Pennsylvania Animal Disease Diagnostic Laboratory System) lab, Dr. Perry Habecker. Dr. Bob Owen joined the lab in 2003 and stayed until 2006. His expertise was meat birds, turkeys and broilers, while I concentrated on layers. Dr. Sherrill Davison served as director of the lab. One of our claims to fame was finding the first case of vertebral osteomyelitis in broilers in the US. Infectious laryngotracheitis and low pathogenic avian influenza surveillance and diagnosis was a major part of our mission. Also, we were highly involved with the Pennsylvania Egg Quality Assurance Program (PEQAP) with surveillance and training of participants. In addition to diagnostic lab duties, our group taught a mandatory introduction to poultry medicine course to 2nd year vet students at UPenn, a 2-month long third year elective course, and 4th year student elective 2-week rotations. These teaching opportunities also gave me incentive to continually look for information to add value to my presentations for these classes.

□ Diamond V / Cargill Animal Nutrition and Health, May 2010 to present.

At the International Poultry Production Exposition (IPPE) in 2010, I found out about an opportunity to move back to my home state of Indiana and work as a technical services veterinarian supporting a postbiotic product for Diamond V.

The postbiotic product, Original XPC, was relatively easy to support due to Diamond V's field and controlled research showing improvements in egg production, Salmonella spp. reduction, and increased disease resistance. Travel for a job such as this, 60 to 70% of working days, is a two-edged sword. It allows one to better keep up to date regarding industry contacts and field problems but on the other hand, takes a toll on family life. In 2018, Cargill purchased Diamond V. I continue to support Cargill's efforts in supporting the feed additive portfolio they offer.

Other career related activities:

□ American Association of Avian Pathologists (AAAP).

A member since graduation from vet school in 1977, I have served in several capacities for the organization.

□ AAAP Board member – 2012 to 2015, representing the Central Region.

□ AAAP Foundation President – 2020 to 2023.

□ AAAP Sponsorship committee – 2015 to present.

I have attended every AAAP annual meeting starting in 1978, 46 meetings, and have learned greatly and enjoyed every one of them.

□ American College of Poultry Veterinarians (ACPV).

In 1995 in Pittsburgh PA, I was lucky enough to qualify for and pass the ACPV exam thus becoming a diplomate of the organization. I have been a member in good standing since then. For the year 2015, I served as president of the organization.

□ Association of Veterinarians in Egg Production (AVEP).

Organized in 1990 by six egg layer veterinarians, Drs. Eva Pendleton (U of NE), John Brown (DEKALB Poultry), Gary Waters (DEKALB Poultry), Kenton Kreager (Hy-Line), Rich Dutton (Waldbaum's), and myself, this organization has grown to having over 130 dues paying members, 25+ student members, and 25+ retired members. AVEP has two meetings a year (IPPE and the annual AAAP meeting) to aid in promoting information exchange among members on layer health management. Consultant members and members employed by layer companies are asked to give their opinions of the importance of the various pullet and layer diseases each year in a survey for updating the USAHA annual report on the state of layer health in the US. I have served as the treasurer/secretary/executive director since AVEP's establishment.

□ Layer Health Management Schools.

These schools are similar to the DEKALB schools and organized by a consortium of Midwest colleges each year in May. Various areas of layer health management were covered by top experts in the industry. I became associated with the schools in 2002 and have been presenting and participating in them every year since then, 22 years. The schools became quite popular with 80+ students attending the 2 day school each year.

☐ US Animal Health Association (USAHA).

I started as a member of USAHA in 1992 and was given the task of presenting the state of egg layer health report to the Committee on Poultry by Dr. Gary Waters who had this responsibility for several years before I took over. I have been giving this report each fall at the USAHA annual meeting since then, 32 years.

☐ North Central Avian Disease Conference (NCADC).

My first Scientific meeting was the NCADC meeting in Columbus OH in 1976 during my senior year in veterinary school. Dr. Rich Dutton, then with Abbott Laboratories, asked me to join him at the meeting. He gave a presentation on using erythromycin to combat *Mycoplasma gallisepticum* in egg layers at the meeting. I have attended most all the NCADC meetings throughout the years and am serving as the chairman of the sponsorship committee. I received the NCADC Meritorious Service Award at the 66 th meeting of NCADC in 2015.

☐ National Poultry Improvement Plan (NPIP).

This organization was instrumental in setting the standards of monitoring for *Salmonella enteritidis* (SE) layer breeders in the early 1990's and for monitoring low pathogenic avian influenza in breeder flocks, commercial flocks, and live bird market flocks. I represented Illinois as a delegate while working for DEKALB Poultry and for Pennsylvania, while working at UPenn. In addition, I served on the General Conference Committee for about 3 years in the late 1980's to early 1990's (my memory is not clear on this).

Final Thoughts:

I have truly enjoyed my career in poultry medicine. I have had the great fortune of working with some of the best veterinarians in the world. I had many valuable mentors throughout and am very appreciative of their help. For example, my first boss, Dr. Dan Wenger, gave me the advice "Figure out what the birds are telling you. They will give you the answer". Another mentor, Dr. Gary Waters, told me "Only give the customer no more than three things to do to correct the problem". Dr. Bob Eckroade told me "Ask questions and listen to all people on a farm - from the house worker to the farm manager to the veterinarian to the nutritionist". I found that joining and participating in organizations like the AVEP, AAAP, and others were quite rewarding and helped in developing the connections so important in our jobs. Also, volunteering to present at meetings really stimulates thought and an incentive to learn as much about your subject as possible to add value to your presentations.

Pet peeves:

☐ Excessive time in receiving lab results – In my diagnostic lab days, I made the effort to give the initial necropsy results to the client that day or early the next by phone or email. Some labs these days do not send results for many days. Follow-up test results should be sent within 3 days at most.

☐ Presentation slides with too much information on them and small font sizes.

☐ Customers (or other veterinarians) who do not answer emails, phone calls, or texts in a timely manner.

☐ Poultry operations built with no structural biosecurity or C&D plans.

☐ Producers not acting on monitored flock results. Example – waiting until a flock is six weeks old to call a veterinarian when the flock body weights did not increase from two weeks on.

Other Lessons learned:

- ☐ Nutritionists and veterinarians need to work together to solve customer problems and can be friends. Some of my best friends in the egg industry are nutritionists.
- ☐ No one person has all the answers. It takes collaboration with other veterinarians, service technicians, allied poultry industry people, nutritionists, etc. to solve many of the problems.

Biography solicited by the Committee on the History of Avian Medicine, American Association of Avian Pathologists.

Additional biographical materials may be available from the AAAP Historical Archives located at Iowa State University. Contact information is as follows:

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403 Parks Library
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Phone: (515) 294-6648
Fax: (515) 294-5525
WWW: <http://www.lib.iastate.edu/spcl/index.html>*