Don’t Worry, They’re Just Drunk

By LUKE SIMPSON, Associate Editor

It wasn’t the answer I was expecting, but I’ll take it.

The dozens of birds found dead in Romania on Saturday was the latest in a spate of mass bird deaths around the world. Whereas no concrete explanations have been found for the deaths reported throughout the U.S., Europe and Asia, Romanian officials were able to trace the problem back to a substance known as “marc” — the residue left over from wine grape processing.

Apparently Romanian birds don’t know when to close out and head home.

With almost every report of the findings — this blog included — running a slightly insensitive, booze-related headline, I couldn’t ignore the fact that the deaths were caused by what is essentially an improperly disposed of industrial residue. If these Romanian avians met their demise after landing in a pond of pesticide runoff, the headlines wouldn’t be so amusing.

Don’t worry, I’m not about to throw red paint on your mink coat. I do, however, think that processors should use this as a reminder to be vigilant when storing and disposing of industrial chemicals and waste.

While the bird deaths may be a coincidence, perfectly normal, the result of a northern hemisphere cold snap or alcohol poisoning, I’m more intrigued by the recent spate of OSHA citations, fines and lawsuits. In Wednesday’s Chem.Insider e-newsletter alone, we reported on three incidents involving leaks, fines and safety violations:

- Salami Plant to Pay $850K for Ammonia Leak [1]

- Mace Spray Maker to Pay $100K in HAZMAT Case [2]
- LA Chemical Plant Hit with 14 OSHA Violations, $55K Fine [3]

It's like OSHA woke up on the wrong side of the bed this year.

In the words of my father, "You can learn from your own mistakes, but it's better to learn from other people's mistakes."

And for those of you still not satisfied with the reasons given for the bird deaths, I leave you with Don Corleone's version of events:

Have you noticed an uptick in inspections and fines from regulators like OSHA and the EPA? Send me an e-mail at luke.simpson@advantagemedia.com [4].

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