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William Mertz, seated, and his brother John pore over some of the DHIA records which are a key

element in the management of their Berks County Holstein herd.

Management Is Their Key to Dairy Success

by Dick Wanner

It costs money for DHIA testing, it costs money to have the AI technician in to breed cows and it costs money for a farm business analysis. So when things get rough in the dairy business, like now, and it's time to watch the pennies, that's the time to think about saving money by doing without outside services. Right?

Wrong, according to just about any farming or dairy expert you ask. Also wrong according to Bill and John Mertz, a pair of Berks County brothers who figure the dairyman needs all the help he can get. Especially in the tough years. Bill and John have been running the family's 200-acre dairy farm for the past 11 years, and they've consistently been among the top ten Berks County DHIA producers. This year the Mertz herd was the second highest DHIA fat producer, with an average production of 661-pounds per cow. Their herd milk

production was 16,533 pounds for the year.

Their high producer - a grade Holstein - milked over 20,000 pounds this year, and a registered animal topped the 19,000-pound mark.

The herd, which numbers about 45 animals milking, is about evenly divided between grade and Registered Holsteins. "I'd love to work towards a Registered herd," Bill said, "but the grades keep giving so much milk I can't get them out of the herd."

The Mertz herd has been on DHIA since 1958. "We wouldn't think of going off DHIA," Bill pointed out. "We've got tie stalls and a pipeline milker, so we never know from day to day what an individual cow is producing. The only way we know what kind of performance we're getting from

our cows is through DHIA records."

Just as welcome as the DHIA tester at the Mertz herd is the artificial insemination technician. "I know we could probably handle our own AI, but I'd rather have someone handling it who does it every day," Bill said. "It doesn't take too many repeat breedings to pay the AI man for his services."

The Mertzzes also buy the Pennsylvania Farmers Association's farm management business analysis service. The FM-BAS accountant calls on them several times a year with computerized data on feed costs, production income and farm input expenses.

In addition to their milking herd, the Mertzzes feed about

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Conference Looks at Control of Farming

The future of farming depends on strengthened cooperatives operating in a relatively free marketplace. The only alternatives are complete corporate domination of agriculture or complete government control.

This was the impression we were left with after an all day conference last week at the Lancaster Farm and Home Center. The conference, which was conducted by professors from Penn State's College of Agriculture was entitled "Who Will Control U.S. Agriculture?"

While the Penn Staters were careful to avoid any attempt at a direct answer to the question posed by the conference, most of them seemed biased in favor of stronger coops - a bias much of the audience shared.

Those attending the conference, according to Lancaster County associate agent Jay Irwin, were ag leaders from a five-county area. Irwin was the local coordinator for the conference, one of 11 scheduled for different parts of the state during a three-month period.

In the morning, the conferees listened while the experts talked about what they perceived to be the four main types of agricultural systems, and a fifth type which would be a combination of all the others. The

1 - Independent open market system; 2 - Corporate farming; 3 - Complete cooperative system, and 4 - Complete government control. The necessary conditions for each kind of farming were presented in turn by the Penn State panelists.

Alvi Voigt, an associate professor of agricultural economics, talked about the changes that would have to be made if the dispersed open market system were to prevail. "In a dispersed system," Voigt said, "large numbers of individual farmers must be able to make management decisions. Open markets are essential to allow the farmer to freely buy the supplies he needs and sell what he produces. The operating farmer, in the open system, plays a composite role of laborer, manager, financier and landholder."

"With this system, farmers could be somewhat better off economically than if they were contractees or laborers, but they would lack enough power in the market place to gain substantially higher incomes."

Voigt said that in order to insure the survival of an open market system, national policies would have to be changed to maintain a public market information and retrieval system. Government would need to take more vigorous antitrust

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Jim Felpel

FFA Regional Agribusinessman

by: Melissa Piper

Many times when FFA projects are mentioned, people tend to think of veal calves, dairy herds, feeder pigs, corn or gardens; however the organization offers much more than the traditional agricultural projects. Perhaps one of the most interesting projects is that of working with small engines.

James Felpel, a member of the Cloister FFA Chapter, at Ephrata Senior High School is an expert in the small engines and mechanical work and has many awards to prove it.

Jim has participated on the small gas engine team that placed second in competition at Penn State and has traveled to the Eastern States Exposition in Springfield, Mass. to compete in contests against other FFA members from all over the Eastern United States.

What is involved in the small engines competitions? Jim explained it in this manner

"The judges take an engine, usually from a lawn mower and rearrange it so it will not be in working order."

"The team or individual must find the problem and correct it properly in the shortest time possible."

Along with repairing an engine in the fastest time, the competitors must take written exams to prove they have a working knowledge of the engines and mechanical terminology.

When asked how he got interested in mechanical work, Jim explained—"my father is a contractor and we always had many trucks and vehicles around our home."

"It was getting too expensive to have them worked on at a garage when something happened so I decided to learn what I could about engines."

No doubt, Jim's family is happy that he has learned so well as he has overhauled many of the trucks and cars at home.

Along with his interest in

mechanical work, Jim has



Jim Felpel, shown overhauling a truck, is a member of the Cloister FFA Chapter at Ephrata High School