

Exotic disease eradication team formed

HARRISBURG - Pennsylvania's Acting Secretary of Agriculture Kent D. Shelhamer on Monday announced that the Department is ready, willing and able to handle any problems when exotic diseases break out in the Commonwealth's livestock and poultry.

Shelhamer said that

Pennsylvania has been extremely lucky in the past few years to escape the spread of any exotic diseases. The day to day work of the Bureau of Animal Industry and strong preventative regulations have greatly decreased the probability of any such outbreaks, but one could take place at any time.

The Regional Emergency Animal Disease Eradication Organization (READEO) is an example of the kind of program that is available when a problem with foreign or exotic diseases threatens the Commonwealth's livestock or poultry industry. READEO is a team, composed of Department of Agriculture personnel in cooperation with top scientists and experts in the field of animal disease.

Shelhamer said that the READEO makes use of the best qualified individuals available regardless of federal, state or other affiliation.

The READEO was organized to combat the dangers posed to U.S. livestock by diseases such as the hog cholera outbreaks in New Jersey and the New England states last summer.

The READEO's have been tested under fire in several states and proved to be highly effective units in preventing the spread of disease outbreaks and eradicating the disease at the local level. The READEO's were set up on the theory that a preselected and pretrained unit of animal health specialists can eradicate a disease more

rapidly than a group pulled together at the time of the outbreak.

The Bureau of Animal Industry held the first seminar of its kind last month when people from the task force, state and federal government, and the livestock and poultry industry met to outline and discuss the READEO setup in Pennsylvania. The seminar was an attempt to alert as many facets as possible that might become involved in READEO operations.

Shelhamer noted that the Bureau of Animal Industry does not confine its work to emergency situations. In addition, the Bureau regularly handles livestock and poultry testing and licensing and provides laboratory services for the Commonwealth's livestock owners. During the past fiscal year alone, over 800,000 specimens were examined at the Summerdale Laboratory which operates under the Bureau.

A system of computers and video terminals provides fast service for livestock owners, keeping close track of livestock herds to pinpoint problem areas and forestall potential epidemics. Information stored in the

computer pertains to the 50,000 herds of nearly two million cattle, records of all animals and herds that have shown evidence of disease and the records of the 900 registered veterinarians in the Commonwealth.

"The use of the terminals provides an added benefit to our farmers," Shelhamer said. "They provide the dissemination of up-to-the-minute findings of all tuberculosis and brucellosis testing, which creates an easy acquisition of health certificates needed for the sale and showing of the farmers animals."

IH plant toured

SCHNECKSVILLE, Pa. - Twenty-four area farmers and their wives are touring International Harvester's Louisville plant today in Louisville, Kentucky.

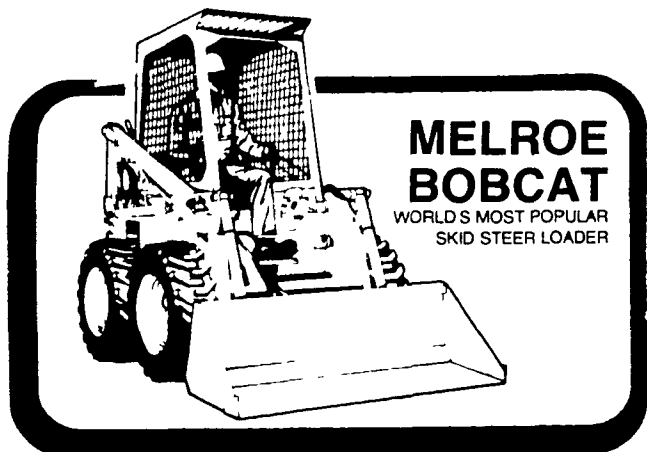
Farmers from Lehigh, Carbon, and Northampton Counties are participating in the fly-in to Louisville for the plant tour, the National Tractor Pulling Contest, and the National Farm Machinery Show.

They are among an estimated 650 Northeastern farmers and IH dealers that visited the plant during February 16 - 19.

While touring the plant, farmers and IH dealers saw the assembly of a light line of tractors and cub cadets, plant quality controls, and manufacture of component parts.

"Today's farmers are making a major investment in equipment," says Hal Keeler of Schoeneck International Equipment, Schnecksville, Pa. who is accompanying the area farmers on the tour. "It's thus important to their decision-making to see this equipment and the emphasis that's placed on quality controls."

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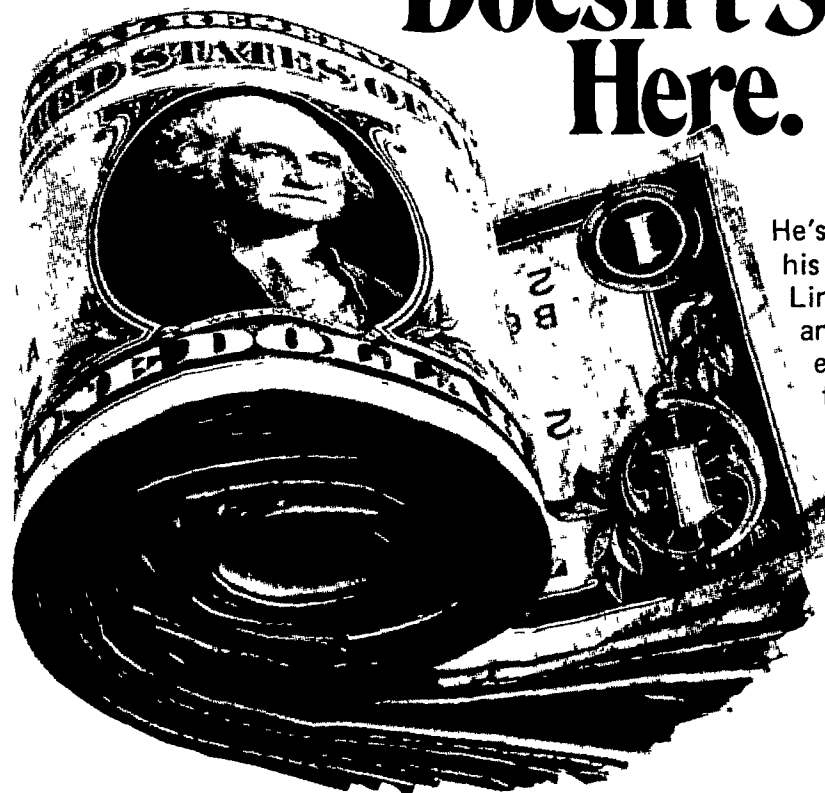
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