

Pork producers concerned with check-off

By JOANNE SPAHR
LANCASTER, Pa. - In the midst of growing commodity promotional campaigns, members of the Pennsylvania Pork Producers Council are concerned for the way their program is going.

Two of those members, John Henkel, Strasburg, chairman of the state committee on check-off, and Abram Fisher, Kinzers, president of the Lancaster County Swine producers, spoke with Lancaster Farming recently on what's happening in their promotional campaign.

Since 1968 the Pennsylvania Pork Producers have been checking off. Until last July the amount was five cents per market hog and two cents per feeder pig. Then, in July the amount was raised to 10 cents per market hog and five cents per feeder pig.

This money had originally been checked off by implied consent, or automatically taken off unless the producer requested otherwise. Slowly,

the three Lancaster County terminal markets dropped this system and changed to checking off only if the producer requested it. The last market to change to this system did so last February, cutting the Pork Producers budget by one-third.

"We don't feel as though we have total cooperation from the market segment when it comes to promoting our product," stated Henkel.

"We as producers see ourselves as involved with the product from the hog to the plate, but we don't think the market segment views their role in the same manner," he commented. Continuing his thought he added, "They have as much to gain as we do if we have more demand for our product."

The problem with the new system, as seen by Henkel and Fisher, is that many farmers ship their hogs into market with a trucker, and because of this, don't have direct contact with the markets to tell them to check off, or sometimes they may

even just forget. As always, the simpler method is certain to get the best results.

But, Robert Frame, owner of Vintage Sales Stables, the last of three Lancaster markets to drop implied consent, feels otherwise.

"If they want to check off, they'll tell us," he states, "and if they forget, all they have to do is send us a card and we'll check off for them."

One of the main reasons why Frame dropped the system is that he feels farmers don't want to check off and they were taking their business elsewhere to escape the stipend. To verify this fact, he points out that only two producers have asked for the check-off since the change-over of the system, and that his business has increased.

"And, I don't agree with this check-off, anyway," states Frame. "Why do the farmers have to pay for everything?" he questions. He thinks the major packing and processing plants should

pay for the promotion - not the farmer.

Henkel and Fisher's point of view is that the product has to be promoted or business will be lost.

"I personally believe that if you don't keep the product in the limelight, you will lose the product," states Fisher, point blank. He cites the examples of the dairy promotion and egg promotions and the great boon they have been to their industries.

"In the Fall, when we had a glut, we had real good demand - we only stayed down at 35 cents for a few weeks, and quite a few people were surprised," he notes. "And, we had people buying when prices were high, too, so people were demanding it." He attributes this demand to keeping the product in the consumers' minds through promotion. And, he believes that if hog farmers knew how the system worked, they would be willing to check off.

Of the 10 cents that goes per market hog, two cents

goes to the National Livestock and Meat Board, a national promotion organization for red meats. This two cents sent to them is earmarked for pork promotion.

Of the remaining eight cents, two stays with the national office, and six returns to the Commonwealth for promotional efforts in the state.

"What we really think is good about this program is that on the state, county, and national level, all the members of boards are pork

producers, so the hog farmer has a say in where his money goes," states Henkel.

Fisher also feels that the money earned nationally - three million - is a small enough budget so that it has to be spent wisely so it goes a long way.

The state organization is currently working on getting a new market in Lebanon County to go by implied consent, and Henkel and Fisher note that Leesport still goes by this method as do many of the major packing houses.

Now is the time

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hours before the next milking time. Pastures with wild garlic should not be grazed by milking cows because of the "onion-flavored" milk that will be produced. Barns should be well ventilated before the milking time when cows are brought in from lush pastures. Careful herd management at this time of

the year will prevent the loss of a tank of milk.

TO REMOVE MANURE PACK

This is the time of the year when the manure pack should be put into the topsoil as a source of fertility and organic matter. Also, with the extreme heat temperatures that may occur in the next few months, the pen or feedlot will be much cooler without this heating manure pack. Animals that are confined during extremely hot weather will suffer greater on top of several feet of manure. Good ventilation is needed with the use of electric fans in some barns. The manure crop should be incorporated into the topsoil as soon as possible after it is put on the fields. Soil injection spreaders for liquid manure is strongly suggested. The folks in the immediate community will also appreciate the prompt mixing of the manure with the topsoil.

Virginville Grange

VIRGINVILLE, Pa. - On April 20 the Virginville Grange will hold an open house at 7:30 p.m. The public, is invited to hear the speaker, Brother Charles Wismer, chairman of the state Grange legislative committee. The program will consist of skits, musical numbers, and a pageant entitled, "A Good Granger and his Community." A one-act play will also be presented. It is entitled "Der Parra Kumpt" or "When the minister comes."

April 20 is also the deadline for the sewing contest entries. Judging will take place 10 days later on April 30.

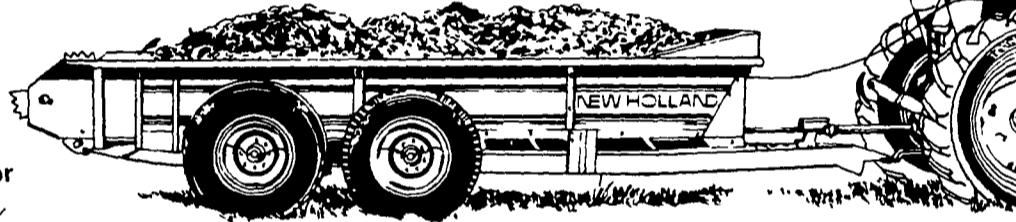
On April 17, softball practice will be held at Bern Church.

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