

# MEDICINE AND MANAGEMENT

By CARL TROOP, VMD



## Thoughts on the art of feeding

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** Dr. Troop is a doctor of veterinary medicine, not a nutritionist. The two aspects of management and health do meet, however, as Dr. Troop suggests in his article. Some portions, if considered to be too far into the realm of the nutritionist, may have to be labeled as "opinion."

Providing a balanced nutritive diet for food producing animals has made tremendous progress in the past 20 years. Along with these changes have come new ideas, products, and terminology. Many farmers who, years ago, were quite confident and satisfied with their simple home mixed

formulas and rations are now confronted and confused by computer programmed feed formulas, new additives, multiple feed programs, complex rations, and a whole rash of people banging on their barn door trying to sell them on the merits of their particular program or product.

Very few farmers don't have problems of some kind, and even fewer still don't yearn for higher production, it is small wonder that these peddlers of profit are successful in convincing many farmers to abandon their traditional feed supply and feeding methods of years standing for promises of new and greater heights of profit. Because the farmer does not understand all that is happening in the feed industry, and because many do not understand the simple

basis of feeding a balanced ration, they relish the chance of having somebody take them by the hand and lead them step-by-step in feeding their cattle, even at a cost which may go a long way towards negating any profit, which might be realized from any increase in production.

Now there is nothing wrong with wanting higher production, fewer problems, and greater profit over feed costs. And granted, some

[Continued on Page 37]

## Ag weather

[Continued from Page 1]

country specific readings on soil temperature, moisture, wind velocities, etc. The forecasts are made available to radio stations in the area and are broadcast for anyone who's tuned in.

The system envisioned for Pennsylvania by Jacques would rely on a computer system in Georgia and a telephone link to a toll-free number. It could become costly. Not finding a sponsor to fund the project has delayed the program by several months already and it is not known when and if the program will ever go into operation. Spokesmen in Washington are eager and optimistic that the program will work.

While that may still be little more than a plan at this stage, the United States Department of Agriculture, in conjunction with other federal agencies, is going ahead with projects aimed at gathering more weather facts for agriculture. A news release issued recently by USDA says:

"Farmers will get more specific and detailed weather information tailored to their county under a cooperative program announced May 17 by the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, (NOAA).

"This cooperative program will give farmers special weather information to help them reduce risks," said Secretary of Agriculture Bob Bergland. "The weather program will cover such information as: the right combination of high temperatures and low humidity for cutting hay, when forage crops will reach their maximum nutritive level and therefore should be harvested, when to begin control measures against insect and disease outbreaks, when to irrigate, and when to apply fertilizer for maximum benefit."

There are two parts to the cooperative program planned by NOAA's National Weather Service—a part of the U.S. Department of Commerce—and Agriculture's Extension Service, the secretary said.

In current drought states, cooperative state Extension personnel have been assigned to work directly with a counterpart in the nearest Weather Service office, providing information on what farming operations are underway at a particular time and what types of weather would affect the farming operations and how. Forecasters then will tell farmers when such conditions are likely to occur.

In another phase of the program, the two agencies are cooperating to get additional local weather information through an agricultural weather network. This network is already in operation in Maryland; plans are underway to expand it on an experimental basis in additional states this summer. In this expanded program, hundreds of volunteers will report local weather to a Weather Service computer in Silver Spring, Md., via toll-free telephone lines.

Presently about 80 volunteers in 20 Maryland counties transmit their observations to the computer by touch-tone telephone, says Galen Dively, Maryland Extension pest management specialist.

The volunteers report data on the maximum and minimum temperatures and precipitation during the previous 24 hours and the weather conditions at time of observation. The observers also send in special 24 hours and the weather conditions at time of observation. The observers also send in special reports at beginning and end of rain, snow, thunderstorms, and other weather conditions; this gives forecasters "ground truth"

[Continued on Page 22]

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