

Alfalfa looking

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alfalfa is therefore questionable," he added, "and don't look for a good situation next Spring either."

Baylor explained that yields of seeds out West are very low due to the prolonged drought that area has experienced. Only about a fourth of the normal irrigation water is available for seed fields. Other seed producing areas have had dry spells as well, and those regions where growing conditions have been favorable cannot make up for the losses encountered elsewhere.

A spokesman at a Lancaster County seed dealership confirms Baylor's warning, adding that the shortage will be more acute with better varieties. Some of the cheaper grades are likely to be available. The shortage is a nationwide problem, the spokesman added.

Baylor and Shirk made their remarks at a field meeting held near here on the Harold Ranck farm. A second meeting was held that evening at the Daniel Stoltzfus farm near Honeybrook. The purpose of the meetings was to show progress of various seed varieties and management practices. One of the more recently developed techniques to come up for discussion was lime coating of seeds. Baylor believes the idea has merit and expresses considerable interest in continuing research on it. Fifteen varieties of alfalfa seed were available for the farmers' inspection, with Baylor describing the qualities of each.

A big part of the program centered on alfalfa diseases and pests. Baylor emphasizes that anthracnose is the most serious alfalfa disease farmers have had to cope with in recent years. It is a high-temperature, high-moisture disease which generally makes its first appearance in late July or August. Shirk pointed out

that alfalfa has been plagued by too much moisture in many areas during the last several years and therefore sees the lack of excess moisture so far this year as a key factor in turning the crop around.

Anthracnose is usually discovered in newly seeded fields first, although it may be found in established stands as well. The first sign of destruction is when individual stems die.

Three pests - weevils, leaf hoppers and leaf miners - came to the attention of the farmers who attended the meeting.

The leaf miner is more of a problem in second and third cuttings, says Baylor. The more ideal conditions there are for alfalfa, the less effect any of the pests have on the crop, the Penn Stater commented. Although aphids are a problem in some fields, they don't pose a threat under most conditions.

Questioned about spraying programs, Baylor emphasized that the economic factors have to be taken into consideration. That's especially true with leaf miners. A thumb rule is that if one leafhopper is caught per two sweeps of the net, spraying is justifiable.

The time of spray applications is determined by results of sweeping for bugs. Again, the thumb rule is to spray when regrowth is four to six inches tall. Baylor pointed out, however, that optimum spraying times vary for different species of bugs. To get rid of them economically requires some compromising on scheduling.

Baylor noted that weevils are the predominant bug problem in first cutting alfalfa; while miners and leaf hoppers come later. A compromised spraying schedule would perhaps catch weevils and miners on the first pass, and miners and leaf hoppers at a later spraying.

"Please don't treat new

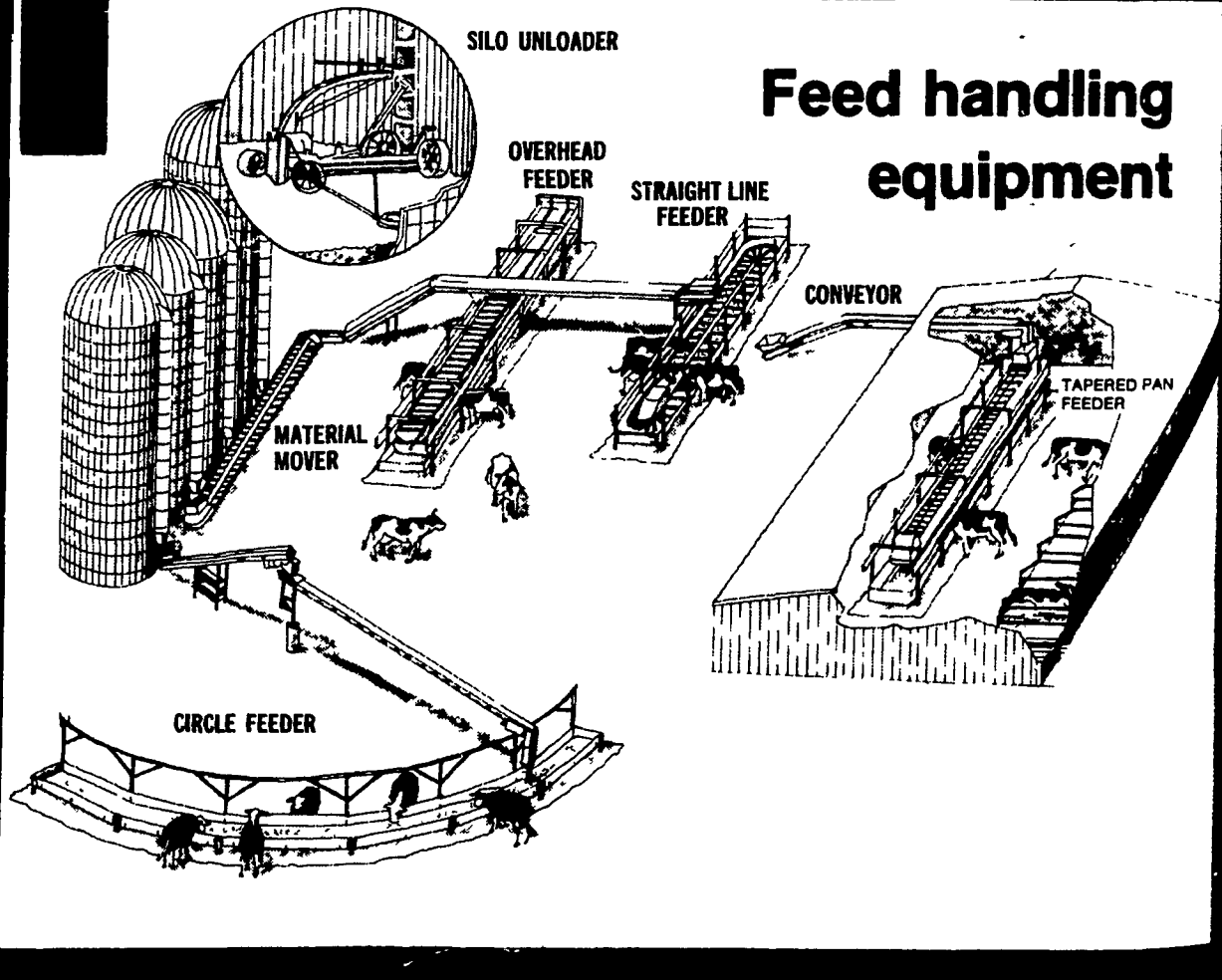
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Chester County farmers gather around a newly established alfalfa stand on the Harold Ranck farm near Russellville. Penn State's Extension

agronomist John Baylor led a program concentrated on diseases, weed control, varieties and hay preservation.

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