

New ag developments featured at field day

By JOANNE SPAHR
LANCASTER, Pa. - Whether it was corn, grapes, potatoes, soybeans, tobacco, forage crops, or flowers the visitors were interested in, there was something for everyone at the field day held on August 11 at the Pennsylvania State Field Research Laboratory near Landisville.

Interested individuals hopped rides on hay wagons to travel to the assorted 20 plot locations scattered over the farm. At each station, a small presentation on the test plot was offered, following which participants were allowed to ask questions of the Penn State specialists available for comment.

John Yocum, superintendent of the research farm, positioned himself in an area designated for tobacco variety breeding and disease research trials. Here, tobacco growers were able to view Pennlan, a new variety being commercially grown for the first time this year, standing between rows of other experimental varieties.

According to Yocum, the Pennlan "looks good" on the research farm, and generally appears so around the county, but farmers are waiting to see how it strips before they make further comment.

Yocum also noted that he is working on a black shank resistant variety that is a year or two away from being released to farmers. According to Yocum, he works anywhere from 10 to 15 years on a new variety before he releases it to tobacco growers, and then he must also have buyer acceptance.

The near-ready-to-be-released variety is fairly tolerant to tobacco etch as well as black shank. Yocum observed that he also has 85 other lines of tobacco which he is breeding toward resistance to etch.

In another test plot, Dr. Marvin Risius, agronomist from Penn State, discussed alfalfa variety trials and the possibility of feeding crownvetch to ruminants.

According to charts explained by the Penn State professor, alfalfa varieties which are resistant to anthracnose disease yield as much as 36 per cent more than those that are not resistant to the disease.

In three-year findings gathered in 1972, Saranac AR, an anthracnose resistant alfalfa variety, produced 22 per cent more yield than Saranac, a variety that is not resistant to the disease.

A study done in 1974, recounting results from a two-year program, showed Saranac AR produced an even a higher yield - 36 per cent more than Saranac.

According to Risius, two of the best public varieties of alfalfa now available to farmers are Saranac AR and Arc. He commented that he was not qualified to report on the best private cultivars.

Risius also described current research being done with crownvetch, the legume now popularly planted on highway banks. Saying that Penn State has been ex-

ploring the potential forage ability of this legume for years, he points out that it yields three to five tons per acre, is comparable to other legumes in chemical analysis, has no serious insect or disease problems, and tolerates poorer land than alfalfa will. However, on the average, it yields 20 per cent less than alfalfa. It is not toxic to ruminants, and when both alfalfa and crownvetch are harvested at the same stages, they have the same animal digestibility.

However, at this point, the research is conflicting as to whether the animals prefer the crownvetch over alfalfa.

"Some walk right over alfalfa to get to it, and others prefer not to eat it," said the crownvetch specialist.

Also in other crop research, Dr. William Stringer, assistant professor at Penn State, gave the current results of a test at the station in which large amounts of potassium were applied to the soil at the seeding time of alfalfa in an effort to eliminate reapplications of the chemical for up to three years.

Research found very little difference in yields during the seeding year even though high and low amounts of potash were applied. Stringer believes that this is due to the fact that alfalfa is a luxury consumer of potassium, meaning that it will consume more than is necessary to produce a good



Dr. M.W. Johnson, corn breeder for Penn State, checks a variety in a commercial corn-hybrid test plot during a field day held recently at the Penn State Research Laboratory near Landisville.

stand when a surplus is available. Stringer noted that potassium also leaches. Because of these two factors, the large application at seeding time is not recommended at this point.

According to Stringer and Dr. John Baylor, agronomist at Penn State, for maximum efficiency, 120 pounds of

potash should be applied to alfalfa stands two times a year - after the first and last cuttings. Since this practice is not always economically feasible, they recommend 240 pounds of potash per acre per year applied after the first cutting.

Berks County 4-H'ers test fitting skills of parents

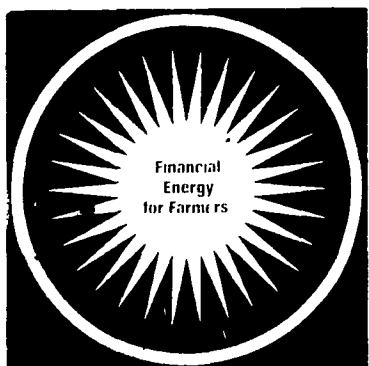


Members of the Berks County 4-H Sheep and Lamb Club put their parents "on the spot" July 27 at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Ian MacKay, Boyertown. The 4-H'ers held a sheep fitting contest for their parents. The contestants were given an equal amount of time to fit a sheep, and by drawing for the sheep, no one had an unfair advantage of working on their own animal. Placing first was Dick Remp (above) Mohnton; followed by 2. Robert Burger, Stoney Creek; 3. Marta MacKay, Boyertown; 4. Walter Ernst, Sinking Spring; 5. Pheebee Hopkins, Oley.

The contest was judged by Sue Hollowbush, a local Corriedale breeder.



Tom Seaman, 15-year old son of Mr. and Mrs. Christian Seaman of Grantville, showed this Duroc barrow to reserve grand champion honors at the Lebanon Area Fair on Wednesday. For the story, and detailed placings, please see page 105.



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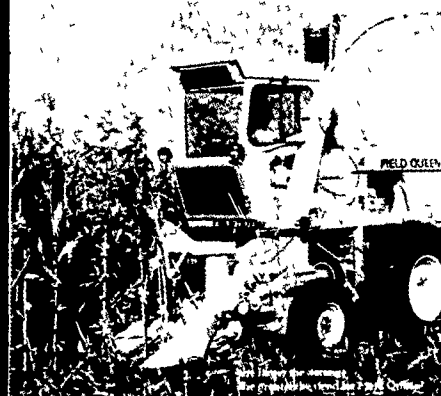
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