

Rural growth

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public oftentimes doesn't know that. Instead, they think of the poultry industry and other farming enterprises in terms of 10, 20 or even 30 years ago.

Irwin is a member of the Cooperative Extension staff of Pennsylvania State University, specializing in poultry.

The Montgomery County farmer who faces opposition to his expansion plans is William H. Gerhart, an outspoken 57-year old dairy and poultryman who has lived on his farm for 35 years. The area is zoned R25 - agriculture residential. The Lancaster Countian with similar problems is Robert S. Weaver, owner of a 23 acre farm which adjoins a residential area.

Both Gerhart and Weaver began grading land earlier this year in order put up modern poultry facilities. Gerhart wants to construct a house for 45,000 laying hens, while Weaver has 50,000 broilers in mind.

As of Friday morning, Gerhart had his 36 by 448 foot house just about under roof despite objections from some of his neighbors. Weaver, on the other hand, is still waiting for permission from the Lancaster County Court.

According to Weaver, "If they stop me, they can stop any farmer in the county." The case could set a state precedent. In the final analysis, it could affect all types of animal agriculture.

Irwin, who has a vast background in agriculture,

especially the poultry business, boils the problem down to one thing: education. He is convinced that people still think of poultry houses in terms of 20 years ago.

"There are really very few problems with today's systems. It's a whole new ballgame today. Producers can't afford to neglect odors and so forth because production would drop." Consequently, buildings are engineered and managed in such a way so as to reduce odor and manure handling problems to a bare minimum. He suggests that anyone skeptical of the poultry industry's ability to work favorably with the environment should visit a modern poultry house and see for himself what conditions are like. "Education beforehand is the key," he noted.

Numerous other specialists at Penn State University agree, as do veteran poultrymen like Glenn Herr, general manager of Pennfield Farms, Inc., Ephrata. He pointed out during a symposium a few years ago that the agricultural products consumer must be educated to either accept the realities of food production or "recognize, accept and absorb the cost of waste disposal as a cost of production that will inflate the cost of eggs, meat and milk."

Nonetheless, agriculturalists - whether at universities or farms - don't deny that farmers must do their part if

they expect to be able to live and work near residential areas. The problems are being recognized, explored, and gradually solved. Speaking at the International Poultry Industries Exposition in October of 1970, Penn State's Dr. Glenn O. Bressler stated:

"Farm odors resulting from manure handling are causing serious problems for poultrymen who find themselves surrounded by creeping urbanization. Offensive odors resulting from literally mountains of livestock wastes are becoming a nuisance factor. Both large and small producers are vulnerable to complaints by neighbors about odors emanating from farming operations. A single complaint may be sufficient to close down a farming operation. Legal authorities are clamping down on operations where odor complaints have been made and where no corrective measures are being adopted. The day when the farmer can say 'I was here first' is gone. Today it is up to the farmer (poultryman) to decide how he can live amicably with his neighbors."

Bressler, a professor in the Department of Poultry Science, made that comment nearly eight years ago. Since then, more technological advances have been made and environmental considerations are greater than ever.

But the pressures from the non-farming public haven't been eliminated and it is no longer entirely true that the "farmer decides how he can live amicably with his neighbors." In the case of



William Gerhart, a Montgomery County dairy and poultry farmer has had to contend with more than \$500 additional costs for securing building permits due to public opposition to his intention of building a layer house for 45,000 chickens.

Robert Weaver it will be the court that decides. The case was tried before Judge D. Richard Eckman on June 20 and a decision from him is pending. If he delivers a negative verdict, then "it could wreck havoc" on Lancaster County poultry operations, says John Pyfer, Jr., attorney for Weaver. "We have taken this case very, very seriously," he said. There are about 100 broiler houses in Lancaster County and the entire poultry business in the

Garden Spot is valued at more than \$80 million annually.

Gerhart, who expects to have his new layer facility completed in September and will hold an open house for the general public at that time, had to absorb costs amounting to more than \$500 due to unexpected hearings and lawyer fees resulting from public opposition to his building plans. These extra expenses were incurred despite the fact that he was well within his rights to want to build a chicken house.

Weaver, too, is acknowledged to be within legal bounds with his plans. His land is zoned agricultural. But because of protesting neighbors, his construction and expansion plans have been stopped. Meanwhile, costs are escalating and income is being sacrificed.

Weaver's opposition maintains that raising broilers isn't farming. They claim it's industrial or commercial, and as such, the new building should be disallowed on agricultural land. A Lancaster newspaper reporter quotes Ronald J. Lack, one of seven plaintiffs in the suit against Weaver as saying: "I bought this land as agriculture, but not knowing that chicken houses fall under agricultural." Lack owns a 5-acre lot adjacent to Weaver's farm.

Both Weaver and Gerhart included elaborate manure handling systems in their plans. In Gerhart's barn, manure from the 45,000 layers will drop to a lower level where it will be air-dried by fans. According to Penn State researchers, it's an essential part of keeping odors down and making handling easier. It's also vital if production is to be at optimum levels. Odors, according to university research, don't just bother neighbors, they bother the farmer and his animals as well. It behooves the farmer to do all he can to keep his environment odor-free, the scientists emphasize.

Dr. Bressler, writing in the Agway Cooperator, an agricultural magazine published by Agway, Inc., said the following about drying poultry manure:

"Manure is dried from 75 to 80 per cent moisture to about 30 per cent before it ever leaves the house, which reduces the manure weight to less than one third the original amount produced. Offensive odors and flies are eliminated."

Scientists and farmers have and still are going to great lengths to make manure handling as easy and pleasant as possible. For example, feeds are being formulated which make for more efficient production and produce more edible food while producing less manure. Water consumption is being managed and in some cases even restricted. Less water in the diet means less water in the manure. According to scientists, it's the water in poultry manure which causes the odor and handling problems.

Herbert Jordan, another Penn State poultry specialist, emphasizes the importance of keeping all unnecessary water out of the manure collection area. He strongly recommends that farmers watch their water supply systems closely and take care of any needed repairs immediately. If that's done, then odors are practically eliminated, he says.

Ventilation, water proofing, and insulation are all essential aspects of proper chicken house management, manure handling, and odor control. Modern poultry houses take all these factors into consideration, and more, such as the feed formulas mentioned earlier.

Gerhart's chickens will be housed in a so-called high-rise poultry house equipped with triple deck cages. He first considered building it last September and became serious about it at the beginning of this year. Going through the proper channels for building permits, he first made his applications in February. Permission was denied. A hearing followed on April 14 in the Municipal Building of New Hanover Township for which an estimated 50 people showed up. According to Gerhart, his proposal "received a lot of static from about a half dozen or so people." After

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