

Livestock markets are a way of life for him

By KENDACE BORRY
LANCASTER — To John Zimmerman, numbers are just a way of life.

Zimmerman is chief of the livestock division of the Bureau of Markets for the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture. Every day, he works with the figures in the many livestock markets that are held throughout the state of Pennsylvania. As of September, he will have worked 17 years for the department, 14 of which he was head of it.

His staff of six, including himself, do the market news reporting. Between them they go to markets, take

down the prices and numbers at the markets as well as sometimes even grade the livestock. Two office members work to tabulate those results, as well as call other markets for their results. This information is noted and typed, then sent to newspapers and radios for public release.

Twelve markets are covered by state reporters each week, and 16 are included in the Pa. Auction Summary, sent out each Friday to summarize the weekly auction picture. The extra four markets are covered by the USDA, by

Jim Anderson out of the Lancaster Stockyards.

Mornings are the hectic time, according to Zimmerman. There is a toll free number for people to call into the office to find out market reports and most calls come in between 9 a.m. and noon. He noted that 1100 to 1200 calls a week are averaged, and a special telephone machine which answers the calls and reads the markets is updated three times a day to give the latest information on the markets. Then, when the phone call comes in, the machine automatically switches on, and the report is given.

Grading feeder pigs is part of Zimmerman's many duties and every Tuesday he travels to the Lancaster Stockyards, and Thursday he goes to New Holland for the same purpose. Twice a month he does the same thing at the New Wilmington auction.

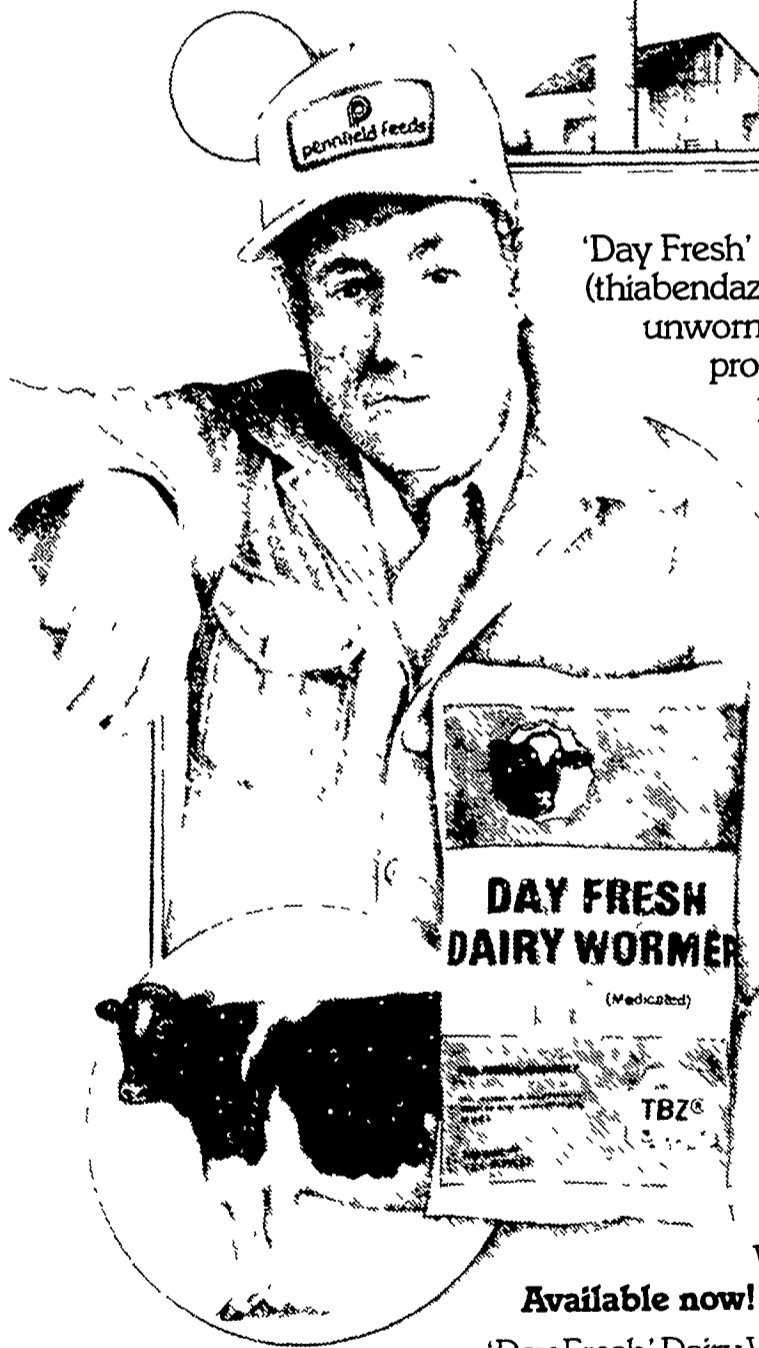
Zimmerman feels that the Marketing Bureau has been held back by budget crunches in the past, and this limits the number of markets that can be covered.

Today's markets are changed from those in the past, he reflected. There are bigger sales, and more



John Zimmerman, chief of the livestock division of the Bureau of Markets for the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture, has spent 17 years reporting livestock market prices.

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livestock is sold. He noted that the northern tier of the state gets little coverage still.

help as special sales, such as club calf sales or lamb sales, where they grade the lambs.

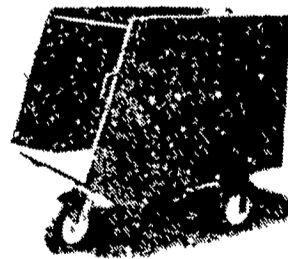
There are a lot of sales done today by tele-auction, according to Zimmerman. In a tele-auction, buyers get together on conference calls, with six to eight buyers all linked together on one conference line. The livestock is described on the phone and the high bid buys the animals. Zimmerman added that the uniform grading system used makes this type of buying possible.

Looking to the future, Zimmerman stated that market news has and will continue to change, noting that the USDA grading standards are used. He sees an ever increasing role for Market News as farmers continue to rely on livestock markets to sell their animals.

There are many other duties that Zimmerman and his staff handle, making special radio tapes, dealing with market organizations or farmers with market problems. They also will

The special toll-free number that farmers can call to get Market News is 800-692-7253; or 800-942-8084 for the area code areas of 814 and 412. Monday through Friday they are updated throughout the day to include nationwide and local market results.

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