

Beferendum lets cattlemen take charge

**BY SHEILA MILLER
HERSHEY** — One of the hottest issues discussed at the annual meeting of the Pennsylvania Farmers' Association was the upcoming beef referendum.

The Association has spoken out in favor of the legislation and called in the executive director of the Beferendum, John Huston, to clear up any misconceptions in the members' minds.

With a motto of "Take Charge", Huston challenged

the cattlemen of Pennsylvania to do something to help their industry, namely help to get the beef referendum passed in early 1980.

"If cattlemen continue to allow misconceptions about their product to go unanswered, the erosion of the beef market will soon be felt by every cattle producer in the nation."

What will the Beferendum do for the industry? According to Huston, it will allow a self-help program of

beef research, information, and the development of new markets for the promotion of the product.

"The proposed Beef Research and Information program is necessary in order to halt the market erosion which will result from unanswered diet-health and other claims against beef. In addition, the order is needed to promote the nutritional values of beef, counter extremes of the cattle cycle, expand foreign markets and increase over-

all demand for beef, Huston said.

He stressed that the referendum is the cattlemen's legislation. And that, if passed, the program will be run and paid for by the cattlemen of the nation, with the governments help.

"If a majority of cattlemen vote yes on the program, 20 cents out of every \$100 of receipts from cattle sales will be used to conduct research, develop new markets and inform consumers of the positive values of beef in their diets", Huston explained. This differs from the previous referendum which called for 3/10ths per cent rather than 2/10ths.

All funds and programs will be administered by a 60 member national Beef Board. The number of members will be determined by the cattle population of each state. The maximum number of board members is sixty-eight. The board would be appointed by the Secretary of Agriculture from a list of nominations, given to him by certified livestock associations.

Harry Stambaugh, a Perry County cattleman and member of the Pennsylvania Livestock Association, pointed out that the earlier 1977 referendum only had 41

per cent of the Pennsylvania voters in favor, whereas nation-wide about 57 per cent were for the referendum. This figure represented 36 states, and 80 per cent of those producing cattle.

Since that time, the referendum has been changed. Not only was the assessment lowered, the new program changes the return of funds to each state's beef promotion organizations. Ten per cent of its state's net assessments, or an amount equal to its own beef promotion collections for the previous 12 months can be requested.

Breeding and dairy cattle are also exempt until time of slaughter. And, if any owner does not wish to participate, a refund equal to the amount contributed can be requested.

Voting for or against the

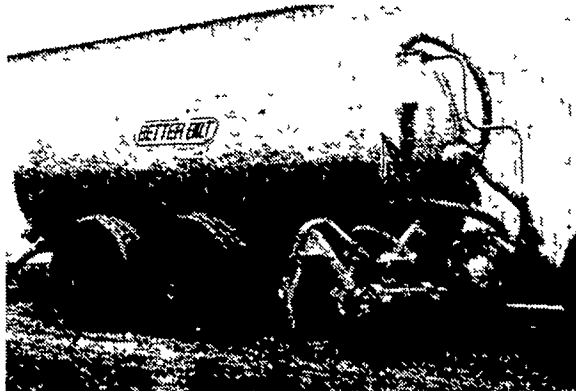
referendum will again take place at the county ASCS offices. In order to pass, the referendum needs only a simple majority of those registered to vote, rather than the 2/3rds needed before. The balloting will be confidential, with the voters signature required only on the outside envelope of a double ballot. If the vote is not contested, individual ballots will be taken from the signed envelopes and cast for an anonymous count.

Registration is planned for early February, 1980, with a vote planned for the end of that month.

"I don't get frustrated if someone is in opposition to the referendum," concluded Huston. "I am hoping to have a lot of meaningful dialogue between cattlemen in the next three months."

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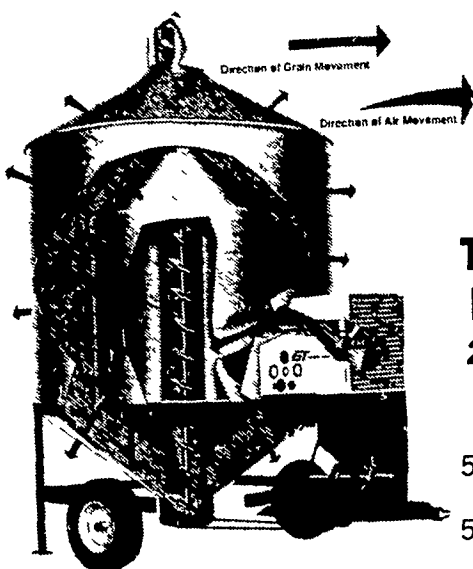
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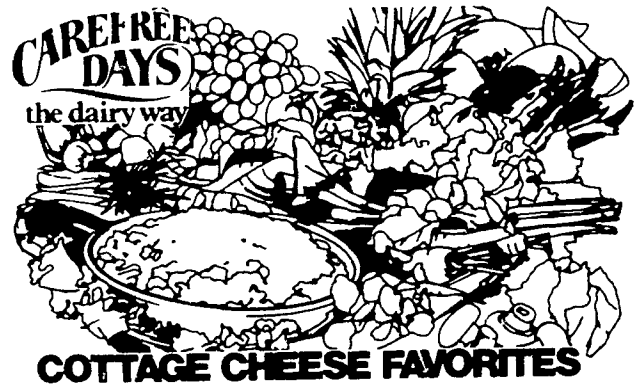
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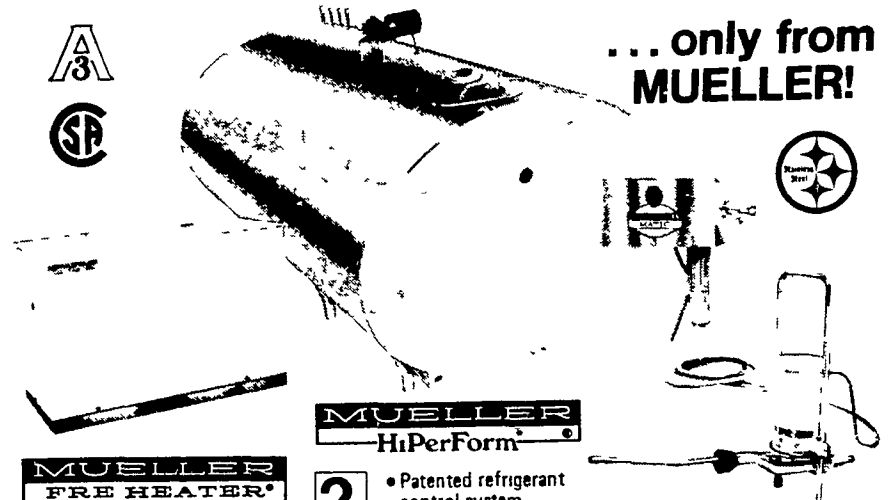
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