

Fertilizer dealers discuss quality, state law, fines

READING — Over 70 representatives of the fertilizer industry from all parts of the Pennsylvania met here December 13 to get the latest technical data in quality control for dry

blends, currently the most popular and inexpensive method of providing plant nutrients.

The workshop was the second such event sponsored jointly by PennAg Industries

Association, the Inland Fertilizer Association, The Fertilizer Institute and the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture.

Apparently Pennsylvania's two-year old fertilizer law, admittedly the toughest in the United States, has had little effect on end-product quality as

measured by the official Pennsylvania inspection agency.

John Longenecker, acting chief of Pennsylvania's feed and fertilizer control reports that test results of 386 fertilizer samples found that 40% were sufficiently deficient to incur a penalty which amounts to ten times

the dollar value of the deficiency.

The period covered by the report spanned six months from July 1 to November 23. The Department's inspection program is customarily reduced during the off-season period.

In spite of the relatively low tonnage of fertilizer used in Pennsylvania compared to major farm states, Ford West, director of member services for The Fertilizer Institute told the group that Pennsylvania's high-penalty law still generates enough revenue to place it third among all the states in dollar volume.

Longenecker told those present of the willingness of the Department to sit down with a representative group from industry in an attempt to solve impact problems, a statement which promptly challenged by a number of representatives and later speaker.

"In spite of numerous pledges by this and prior Administrations, there has been absolutely no overtures made by Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture officials toward discussing these problems," according to George Williams of Codorus Fertilizer Service and Secretary of the Inland Fertilizer Association. This was typical of similar remarks by others.

As the program progressed, some of the reasons for quality control problems unfolded.

Ed Huber, Chief chemist for Agrico Chemical

Company's Baltimore plant said. "There is no way that suppliers of basic fertilizer ingredients can justify the enormous increase in cost which would be required to provide the precisely uniform particle size needed to insure a perfectly homogeneous mix, especially since this perfect distribution is of no importance to farmers in an agronomic sense."

However, Huber and other speakers including John Dantine, general manager of Lancaster Bone Fertilizer Co., Quarryville; and William Angstadt, vice-president of Reading Bone Fertilizer Co., Reading, mentioned specific ways that segregation and other quality control problems could be minimized.

During the afternoon the entire group toured the Reading Bone Company's fertilizer plant where trouble-shooting procedures were described. Samples of actual blended product were taken by official state inspectors beginning with the individual ingredients and then progressively through the process until the final fertilizer form was either in the bag or the spreader vehicle. Test results will be announced when laboratory analyses are completed.

Chairman for the program was Donald W. Parke, executive vice-president of PennAg Industries Association, the Ephrata-based organization representing agribusinesses.

(Turn to Page 24)

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Luke Burkholder, a tester for the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture, demonstrated his sampling techniques for a group of fertilizer industry men at Pennsylvania's second annual fertilizer quality control seminar and workshop held on Thursday in Reading.



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