Straight-talk on Beeferendum

LANCASTER — Beef producers will soon have an opportunity to vote in a referendum on a Beef Research and Information Order.

To vote, a producer must register between January 28 and February 6 at a local Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service office. Voting will be Feb. 19-22.

All cattle producers would be affected by the order and each individual (cow-calf operator, stocker-grower, feeder, dairy operator, etc.) who owned cattle during 1979 is eligible to register and vote.

The 1976 Beef Research and Information Act authorizes a national program under which cattle producers would be assessed to finance research and information activities designed to improve markets for cattle, beef, and beef products. This program will not be established unless producers vote to approve the order.

According to the Act, amended in 1978, for the order to become effective, at least 50 per cent of those registered must vote in the referendum and a majority of those voting must vote in favor of the order

Originally the Act required approval by two-thirds of the registered producers voting. An order voted on in 1977 was favored by 56.4 percent of those voting and was not approved.

If the order is approved, a Beef Board composed of up to 68 beef producers would be appointed by the Secretary of Agriculture to administer the order, collect assessments, and conduct a beef research and information program.

Up to five non-voting consumer advisors would be appointed to the board by the Secretary. The board would recommend qualified persons for these positions.

It would elect 11 of its members to serve on an executive committee. This committee could employ a staff and direct the program

within policies set by the board.

USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service would monitor the program. This review responsibility would include approval of the board's plans, projects and annual budgets.

Board members and alternates would serve without compensation but would be reimbursed for necessary and reasonable expenses.

They would be appointed to 3-year terms from nominations submitted by certified producer organizations.

Any organization representing producers may request certification by USDA to participate in nominating board members. To become certified, an organization's membership would need to consist of a substantial number of cattlemen who produce a substantial volume of cattle in a designated geographic area.

Each state or geographic area would have representation on the board proportional to its share of the U.S. cattle inventory.

The following geographic areas would be represented by one member and alternate: Alabama, Arizona, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Idaho, Illinois, Indiana. Kentucky, Louisiana, Michigan, Mississippi, Montana, New Mexico, New York, North Carolina, North Dakota, Ohio, Oregon, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Tennessee, Utah, Virginia, West Virginia, Wyoming, Nevada-Hawaii, Washington-Alaska, Maryland-Delaware-New Jersey - District of Columbia, and the New England States.

States entitled to two members and alternates would be: California, Colorado, Minnesota, Oklahoma, South Dakota, and Wisconsin.

Three members and alternates would represent Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, and Nebraska.

Texas would have 6 members and alternates.

The board would develop, and submit to USDA for approval, programs of research, consumer and producer information, education, advertising, and promotion for cattle, beef, and beef products.

The board could, with USDA approval, allocate funds for use by a State's beef council or other beef promotion entity to carry out activities under the order. Funds could not be used to influence government policy or action.

Advertising or promotion programs could not make misleading or unwarranted claims; make any reference to private brand names of beef or beef products; or use unfair or deceptive acts or practices with respect to quality, value, or use of any competing product.

Assessments would be made through a deduction by the buyer each time cattle are sold. Slaughterers would collect and send assessments to the beef board at the time of slaughter.

The final assessment would include the accumulated total of assessments paid by all owners of the cattle. The assessment rate could not exceed two-tenths of 1 percent of the sale price of cattle for the first two years of the program operation.

After that, the assessment rate could be changed by the board with USDA approval but could not exceed five-tenths of 1 percent.

At the two-tenths of 1 percent level, about $40 million would be collected annually.

With an assessment rate of two-tenths of 1 percent (20 cents per $100 value) the assessment process would work as follows:

A cow-calf producer who sells a calf to a stocker-grower for $400 would have 80 cents deducted from the check he receives.

If the stocker-grower sold the animal to a cattle feeder for $600 an assessment of $1.20 would be deducted by the feeder.

If the feeder sold the animal for slaughter for $800, the slaughterer would deduct $1.60 and forward it to the beef board.

Each owner would contribute an amount based on the value they added to the animal. In this case the cow-calf producer contributed 80 cents and the stocker-grower and cattle feeder each contributed 40 cents.

High-valued breeding or dairy animals would be exempt from assessment until slaughter. Since these cattle reach their peak value prior to slaughter, rather than increasing in value until slaughter, they do not fit the value-added concept of assessment.

Beef producers not wishing to fund the program would have their assessments refunded upon request when accompanied by proof of payment. The refund request would need to be made within 60 days after the end of the month in which assessments were due. The board would make refunds within 60 days of the request.

Slaughterers would maintain and make available to the board or USDA information needed to carry out the order. All such information would be kept confidential.

The order would be terminated if it is not carrying out the policy of the Act. The Secretary is required to hold a referendum to discontinue an order if requested to do so by at least 10 percent of the number of producers that voted in the referendum that originally approved the order. An order would be terminated if a majority of producers, accounting for more than half of the cattle produced by all voters, favored termination.

CORRECTION

The date for Animal Health Day at the Farm and Home Center was incorrectly printed as Feb. 15 in last week's Animal Medic ad. The correct date is Tuesday, February 5. See page 13. We apologize for any inconvenience this may have caused.

Two PEMA officers from Lancaster Co.

LANCASTER — Two Lancaster County men were recently elected as officers for the 1980 Pennsylvania Egg Marketing Association.

Paul Fischer, Rheems, was elected to serve as the organization's president. And, Paul Sauder, Lititz, was elected to the office of treasurer.

Other PEMA officers include Galen Buckwalter, Greencastle, as vice-president, and E.J. Lawless, Jr., Harrisburg, as secretary.