

Just 1704 Pa. crop acres are held by foreigners

HARRISBURG — State Agriculture Secretary Penrose Hallowell Friday announced that preliminary reports show foreign land ownership in the Commonwealth is minimal. "The Department has been receiving information on foreign land ownership in Pennsylvania through the Foreign Land Investment Disclosure Act, initiated by

Congress in 1978. It requires foreign persons or corporations with foreign ties (five percent or greater foreign interest) to report their specific holdings to the USDA," he said. "To date, our information shows 0.03 percent or 1704 acres of Pennsylvania's six million acres of crop and pasture land is foreign owned. The statewide pic-

ture shows 0.53 percent or 154,041 acres of the state's total 28.9 million acres is owned by five percent or greater foreign interests," Hallowell said. Under the law, foreign persons or corporations with foreign ties owning U.S. agriculture land as of February 1, 1979, were required to file a report with the USDA's Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service office by last August. Those who have not reported land holdings are now in a penalty status.

Failure to report, or filing late reports or misleading reports, can result in penalties up to 25 percent of the fair market value of the owner's interest in agricultural land. Those who acquired or disposed of U.S. agricultural land after February 1 must file within 90 days of purchase.

Hallowell noted the law defines agricultural land as all land used for agriculture, forestry or timber production.

"This includes land being used for agriculture when

purchased, as well as land converted to agricultural use after purchase," he said. Tracts smaller than one acre, which produce less than \$1000 worth of gross agricultural sales a year are exempt from the act.

"It is vital for foreign land owners to report their holdings to the USDA," Hallowell said. "The penalties can be severe if the foreign owner chooses to disregard the law."

Hallowell also noted that

House Bill 1778 has been unanimously voted out of the State Senate Agriculture and Rural Affairs Committee and awaits Senate approval. "The bill would limit alien ownership of agricultural land in Pennsylvania to 100 acres. All aliens would also have to report their agricultural land holdings to the State Agriculture Secretary.

"Although our present information shows a large portion of foreign owned

land in Pennsylvania is not prime agricultural land, much of this land does include Pennsylvania's natural resources — timber, mineral rights and natural gas.

"The study of foreign land ownership in the Commonwealth is deserving of our attention. It is one of the many steps we are taking at the Department to support the family farm and Pennsylvania agriculture as a whole," said Hallowell.

USDA calls for study

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Assistant Secretary of Agriculture Bobby Smith has called for the naming of a panel of experts to study the need for testing imported horses for equine piroplasmosis.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service had published a notice in the April 27, 1979 Federal Register proposing that the equine

piroplasmosis testing be dropped.

"But much controversy has been expressed relative to the pros and cons of such action," Smith said.

"Therefore, before any final action is taken, a panel will be selected to hold a public meeting on the proposal," he said.

"The objective of the meeting is to obtain more information relative to the seriousness of the disease and the impacts of removing

the test requirements from the regulation."

Francis J. Mulhern, administrator of the animal and plant health agency, said the USDA is particularly interested in receiving information from scientific experts who have had first-hand experience with the disease, both in the U.S. and abroad.

Equine piroplasmosis is caused by a tick-borne microscopic parasite that destroys red blood cells. Although the disease rarely is fatal and some infected horses may never show symptoms, it can weaken horses through anemia and liver damage.

Anyone interested in further information may contact David Herrick, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, 6505 Belcrest Road, Room 817, Hyattsville, Md. 20782. Phone 301/436-8530.

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