

Berks beef producers look at better feeding techniques

BY LAUREL SCHAEFFER
Staff Correspondent

LEESPORT — Berks County beef feeders were given the opportunity to attend a beef feeders meeting sponsored by the Extension Service in cooperation with Penn State, February 19 at the Berks County Agricultural Center.

The first such meeting in many years, featured techniques to feed cattle more profitably and explanation of the new USDA feeder cattle grading system.

Lester Burdette, Penn State extension specialist, stressed the use of concentrates, implants and feed additives. Remarking that investments on the proper implants can produce a relatively high return on investment, he urged cattlemen to use them.

He said that 85 to 95 per-

cent of the beef sold in supermarkets was raised with the use of implants.

The beef specialist remarked that Rumensin, a commercial methane inhibitor, is the best discovery to "come down the road in beef feeding for 30 years." When feed as a supplement this product saves 8-10 percent of the feed needed to produce a market steer. However, it can only be purchased in a commercially prepared feed supplement.

Implants increase feed efficiency and rate of gain, Burdette continued. Directing his attention to producers who specialize in naturally fed beef, Burdette remarked that if they weren't getting eight to ten dollars more per hundredweight they were losing out.

Cattle under 600 pounds,

he said, should be fed a natural protein consisting of 14 to 17 percent of a ration, but can be fed a non-protein-nitrogen (NPN) sources above this weight level.

"For cattle above 600 pounds, up to one-third of the protein in a ration can be from NPN," Burdette said, "and entire protein level in the ration can be lowered to 11 to 13 percent."

He discussed several different types of additives to increase the protein level of silage. He mentioned urea, urea and limestone, anhydrous ammonia, commercial NPN, and bacteria, yeast and enzymes.

With the present high overhead in feeding cattle, rate of gains exceeding two pounds per head per day are necessary for a profit, Burdette said.

He forecasted there won't be cattle marketed at 1,300 to 1,400 pounds in the near future. These weights will bankrupt feeders, Burdette explained. The producers were also told that marketing is probably the most important cost factor in producing cattle, but there were no easy answers to a marketing formula.

Briefly discussing shipping fever, the beef specialist explained that it is primarily caused by stress but is complicated by lack of potassium. It doesn't matter if the cattle were shipped 20 miles or 2,000 miles, in hot or cold weather, Burdette explained.

After shipping cattle, feed them alfalfa hay first, he advised for a good source of

potassium. Grass hay may be substituted.

Due to changes in breeding cattle away from the three British breeds, a new grading system for cattle became necessary, Clair Engle, Penn State extension specialist, explained.

The old system failed to reflect a difference in frame size or body type of feeder cattle, and it didn't reflect the potential of the feeder cattle," Engle said.

The new system adopted by the USDA and presently in effect was designed to make grades more descriptive. It is a more effective basis for identifying and grouping feeder cattle.

The new system grades cattle according to the size of their frame. The designation "L" means tall, long cattle for their age. These cattle should weigh 1,200 pounds or more than when they acquire ½-inch of back fat thickness as steers and 1,000 pounds or more as heifers. Cattle graded "M" are slightly tall and long for their age and will weigh from 1,000 to 1,200 pounds when finished as steers and 850 and 1,000 pounds as heifers. Cattle graded "S" have small frames and should finish about with ½-inch of back fat before they are 1,000 pounds as steers and before they weigh 850 pounds as heifers.

Numerical grades for muscle thickness, include "1" for cattle that are well muscled and bulging; "2"

for medium muscled cattle usually with dairy breeding; and "3" for very thin cattle. Engle also noted there is an inferior grade for cattle. Double muscled cattle are also graded inferior because they do not acquire any fat, are infertile, and unuseable. Inferior cattle are marked with a blotch.

Also on the program were Clyde Myers and Jim Haldeman, Berks County extension agents. Myers presented a short program explaining the many services and news letters offered by the extension service. Haldeman conducted a recertification program for persons with pesticide certificates.

Broiler placements off three percent

HARRISBURG — Placements of broiler chicks in the Commonwealth during the week ending February 16 were 2,132,000, according to the Pennsylvania Crop Reporting Service.

The placements were three percent below the corresponding week a year earlier and eight percent below the previous week. Average placements during the past nine weeks were three percent above a year earlier.

Placements in the 21 key poultry producing states were 79,128,000, about the same as the previous week but six percent above the same a year earlier. Average placements during the past nine weeks were six percent above a year ago.

Broiler-fryers slaughtered in Pennsylvania under federal inspection during the week ending February 6 totaled 1,758,000, with an average liveweight of 3.96 pounds.

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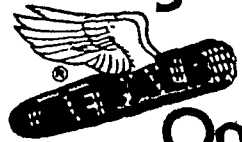
Yield Bulletin

Yield Results from the Pa. Five Acre Corn Club show Dekalb's XL-55A is a big yielder at harvest. Ray Diebold (center), RD #3, Altoona, Pa. shows his trophy to Dale Furry, his Dekalb Dealer and Herb Ayres, Dekalb District Manager.

Diebold's yield with XL-55A was 207.9 bushels of dry Shelled Corn.

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