

Dairy Day program cites stray voltage problem

LANCASTER — Stray voltage may be found on as many as 20 percent of the farms in Pennsylvania and may be more of a problem than first realized, according to Steve Spencer, Penn State dairy specialist.

"This stray or transient voltage causes uneasiness in herds," Spencer said, "and can even be related to mastitis."

The problem usually is caused by poor grounding conditions in the milking parlors, Spencer explained.

Levels of voltage as low as a half-volt can be detected by cows and cause a problem, he said.

Spencer has recorded voltage levels as high as 3½ volts and has heard of even higher measurements of stray voltage in milking parlors.

The dairy specialist recommended the use of a digital volt meter to check for the problem. Among areas of possible grounding problems he listed were the bulk tank to the drain and the stalls or feeders to the gates.

Some cows are more susceptible than others and can result in uneven milkout, he said.

The problem can also originate off the farm, he ex-

plained. Spencer cited the example of a high electrical transmission line in Franklin County that caused a problem on a farm more than a mile away.

Turning to the subject of milk cooling systems, Spencer said that increasing attention is being directed at heat reclaimers to help reduce energy costs.

"In the production of milk there are essentially two processes," he said, "the cooling of the milk and the heating of water."

If there can be an exchange of heat between them, he said, a savings in energy costs can result.

Heat from the condenser of the cooling unit can be put through a reclaimer and be used to heat water for such uses as washup.

Payback times can range from one year to five years or more depending on the volume of use.

Spencer said that pre-coolers have their place if sufficient amounts of water are available on the farm. Water needs can be as much as two to three times the amount of milk produced.

A pre-cooler with a direct expansion tank is the most efficient in terms of energy consumption, according to Spencer, and ice building

systems cool milk more rapidly but are more costly to operate.

Another of the program topics dealt with managing alfalfa as a key crop to produce milk.

The most important factor in growing alfalfa is getting the plants off to a good start, according to Donald Robinson, Garden Spot High School vo-ag adult teacher.

Robinson said that planning must begin with the selection of well drained fields which are manageable and fit the amount of labor and type of machinery available.

He urged the use of starter fertilizer for alfalfa in much the same manner it is used for corn.

Robinson discouraged the use of manure on established alfalfa since it just promotes weed and grass growth.

"In the planting of alfalfa the seed needs good soil contact," Robinson stressed.

The grain drill should be set up and operated properly, he said. Use of a packer wheel is important, too.

Concerning the right time to harvest, a bud check can be used for the first cutting.

"On later cuttings look at the bottom of the plants for regrowth," Robinson said.

"If half of the crowns show

three-quarters of an inch of regrowth, it is time to cut."

He also explained why it is recommended that no cutting be made in early September. If alfalfa is cut then, the plants' rhizome development is affected and the yield of the first cutting in spring is reduced.

Larry Hutchinson, Penn State veterinarian, discussed the dangers of nitrate buildup in animals and tips for raising healthy calves and heifers.

"Dairymen must be concerned with the total amount of nitrates getting into cattle," he said.

Ruminant animals convert nitrates into nitrites, which are even more toxic, he explained.

The veterinary specialist cited a number of high risk conditions which could lead to nitrate problems.

Plants accumulate nitrates during drought conditions and higher levels result. Heavily fertilized small grains, such as oats or rye, used as green chop can contain high nitrate levels.

Certain weeds, such as chickweed and lambs quarter, can be high nitrate sources. A problem can result when animals on non-green feed are turned out in-

to pasture containing these weeds.

Hutchinson also urged care in the feeding of stacks or large round bales. During the curing process, heating inside the bale can result in a nitrate buildup.

Discussing the raising of calves and heifers, Hutchinson said that two goals should be a low death rate of about five percent and a good growth rate that the animals reach the breeding stage at the proper age and weight.

During the first two days, a major concern should be

the prevention of coliform scours. Calving pens should be kept as clean as possible with a good level of bedding.

Nutrition is important for the first two months, he said, and sufficient energy in the diet gets the young stock off to a good start.

Hutchinson defined weaning as a time of real stress. Don't increase this stress, he added, by moving the animals at this time.

The veterinary specialist also urged that heifers be taped to determine when they are ready for breeding.

Lancaster Conservation District to hold banquet

LANCASTER — Graham T. Munkittrick, the state conservationist for the Soil Conservation Service in Pennsylvania will be the guest speaker at this year's Lancaster County Conservation District annual banquet.

Munkittrick, a native of Orange, New Jersey, has been in the top position in SCS in the state since 1976.

Before coming to Pennsylvania, he was in the same position in both Maryland and Rhode Island. Munkittrick's career with

SCS began in 1957 in New Jersey where he started on his road to state conservationist by serving as a soil conservation technician, soil conservationist and district conservationist.

The annual banquet will be held at 6:30 p.m. on March 20, at the Good'n Plenty Restaurant in Smoketown.

Tickets for the occasion can be purchased at the District office or from any director or staff member for \$6 per person. Advance reservations must be made by March 17.

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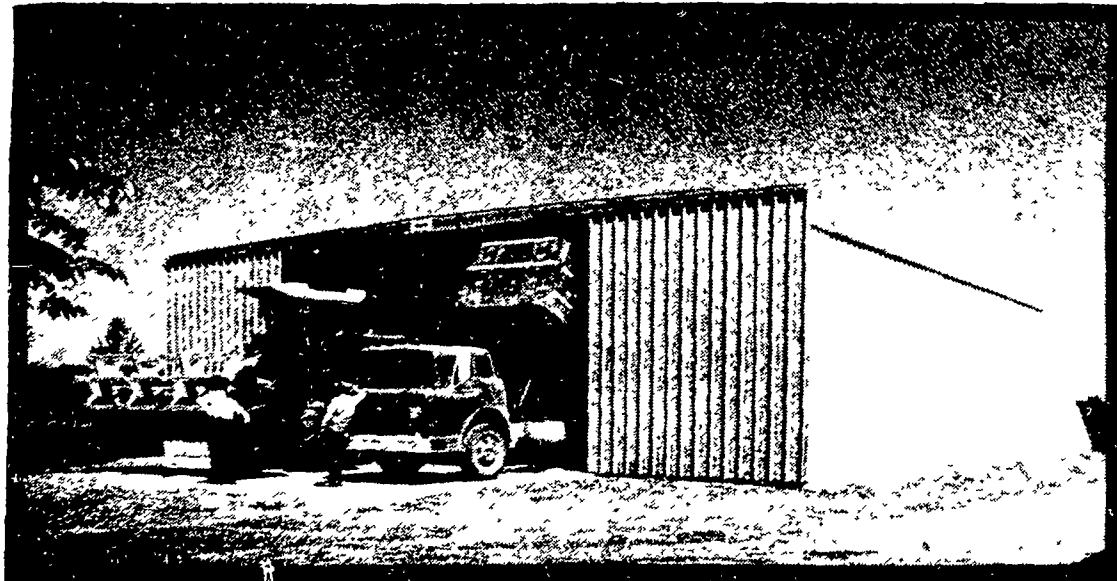
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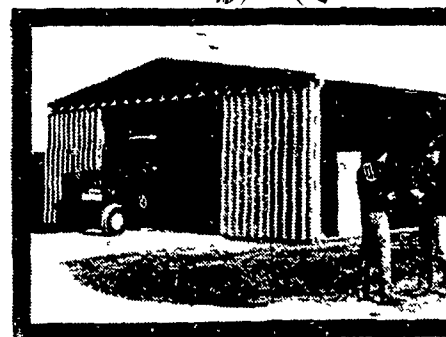
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