

Solanco Young Farmers study forage samples

BY SUSAN KAUFFMAN
Staff Correspondent

QUARRYVILLE — The statement "What you see is what you get," is not necessarily a wise sentiment when it concerns evaluating forage feeds. Several Solanco Young Farmers who met recently at the high school were surprised at the test results from forage samples they brought in for analysis.

Technology continues to specialize and analyze in greater detail, and now a new infrared spectro computer system designed by Dr. John Shenk, at Penn State, can run the analysis in a revolutionary short period of time. Chemical analysis of forages generally takes several weeks while the infrared spectro computer can do the job in two minutes.

The system was in the development and planning stage for five years before being put into actual operation two years ago. Since early last fall, Dr. Shenk and associates at his at the Penn State Laboratory for the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Regional Pasture Research Lab have taken the van housing the computer system on the road to introduce it to dairymen and cattlemen.

During one of these meetings held in the Solanco area, Dr. Shenk and an associate, Buck Fetzer, analyzed forty-seven forage samples brought into the high school. After the afternoon analysis, Dr. Shenk spoke to a packed classroom of curious farmers at an evening program. He explained the process to the group whereby the various forage samples are prepared properly for infrared analysis. Once the technology was explained, Shenk proposed the possibilities in nutrition and formulating



Dr. John Shenk works in the van equipped with the infrared spectro computer

balanced feeding programs based upon findings from the forages being used by the cattleman or dairyman.

The infrared system analyzes hay, corn silage, haylage, high moisture corn and soybeans as well as other forages. Once the samples are weighed, dried by microwave in the case of wet forages, ground finely, stirred, then placed into small disc-like containers for infrared light analysis, the results are given on a computer printout.

The printout records percent of protein, percent of moisture, Total Digestive Nutrients, percent of fiber and percent of dry matter. Shenk also grades the forages on overall quality for nutritional value. What sometimes looks to be a good nutrient source may prove lacking when judged under the infrared test.

Once the forages being fed

presently by a farmer are tested, Shenk can formulate a balanced feeding program from the results. Proper feeding can increase profits considerably, Shenk said. In too many instances farmers are feeding imbalanced forage rations and in the process shortchanging themselves.

One of the greatest offenders in many feeding programs, as Dr. Shenk has found to be in evidence, is feeding too much high moisture corn. The animals fill up on the corn then do not have enough room to eat sufficient quantities of high protein forages. These farmers are really working against themselves, he said.

A total analysis and a balanced feeding program mean increased profits. This infrared computer is a management tool which cuts analysis time drastically from the old method taking several weeks to a two minute per sample time.



Buck Fetzer, associate at Penn State USDA Regional Pasture Research Lab prepares forage sample for the infrared scanner. The wet forages are dried in a microwave oven.

Shenk suggested during some questioning in the afternoon discussion that a farmer could regularly set aside an hour to go to a future site housing the system to have his feeds analyzed and a feeding program formulated. The larger the number of animals being fed and the more often the forages change, the more frequently the analysis should be done.

Just how the system can be implemented or provided out in the farming areas is unanswered as yet. The system could probably be

set up in a given site for \$75,000. With the cost per cow in the range of \$20, Shenk suggested 2500 cows or an average base of 44 herds could make the van operation of equivalent apparatus profitable.

How soon, who will fund it and where just such a testing service can become readily accessible to farmers are all unanswered questions at present. Researchers are working on a pilot program to take the van to feedlots, but the program is only in the planning stage.

Elects local men to legislative board

NEMA eyes new fowl processing plant

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Information reviewed by the Northeast Egg Marketing Association board members at a meeting in Washington, D.C. last week may pave the way for another fowl processing plant to come on stream in the Northeast.

Reports to the group by officials of NEMA and FACTS indicated that an existing plant site in Western Massachusetts may offer solutions to egg producers' need for more dressing line time in the New England and Mid-Atlantic areas.

Summing up survey information now in hand, Mike Arcidy of FACTS told NEMA directors that a major industrial development group has interested FACTS and NEMA in a strategic site for a dressing plant.

Buildings already are in place with access to as much as 24 million gallons of water a week without charge. The opportunity is there for NEMA and FACTS to operate a modernly tooled fowl dressing plant on a lease basis in which they would furnish management input, he said.

Using fowl dressing as an anchor operation there is strong potential to include red meat and fish rack processing with production of meat meal, bone meal, and fish meal as added dividends.

This protein recovery feature could have significance in the Northeast's feed-deficit situation.

Opportunity to process broilers in the area around the plant is another possibility, if modern methods of production for that type of bird can be restored in New England.

Still to be explored are other tangents including the production of fresh chicken broth and poultry meat pies.

Basic financing would come from the Massachusetts State Industrial Agency with NEMA handling responsibility for supplying fowl from the area. NEMA's directors exhibited strong interest in the plan asking that both NEMA and FACTS vigorously explore it with due regard for all facets of any business responsibility it may carry for NEMA and FACTS.

President John Ricca unveiled a new NEMA legislative committee under the chairmanship of Andy Hansen, Lancaster. They will be responsible for input and recommendations to be handed up to UEP.

Other members of the legislative committee are Bob Park and Al Wenger, Pennsylvania; Walter Lamkin and Morris Cohen of Maine; Dick Stark, New Hampshire; Leopold Leriche, Vermont; Frank DiLanna, Rhode Island; Don Upton and John Ricca, Massachusetts; Jerry Srednicki and Jeff Carlin, Connecticut; Kurt Kreher and Meyer Kaplan, New York; Walter Rosenstock, New Jersey; David Baker, Delaware; and Claude Steger, Maryland.

Ricca expressed the view that this committee can be especially effective since it begins service at a time when a new national administration has assumed office. Chairman Hansen and Chris Bushway, UEP's Washington representative, then briefed the group for one-on-one visits with congressmen and senators the following day.

In his report to the meeting, NEMA's General Manager Bill Rent said the organization's financial position is the best ever with more active egg promotion programs in place than in 1980.

Valerie Heine, AEB coordinator for the Northeast, detailed

cooperative funding programs she has set up for the various states and expressed strong hope they can be reinforced in the future.

Special feature of her presentation was a TV film on modern egg production made in Connecticut by producers cooperating with TV media. The film stresses the plusses of modern production practices and effectively ties in American Egg Board egg commercials.

Charles O'Rielly, NEMA mid-Atlantic manager, sketched the continued growth of Unepro insurance programs in the Northeast. Since October new in-

urance programs have been written totaling \$148 million in property values and about three million in bird numbers.

Nationwide the program covers 180 accounts, and 625 million birds. Total property value is in excess of \$600 million.

At NEMA President Ricca's invitation Al Pope, President of UEP, updated the group on national activity involving animal welfare.

He put special stress on the formation of a study committee in UEP that is investigating alternative marketing methods for eggs in this country and throughout the

world.

A special target will be possibilities for egg marketing through regional cooperatives, following the patterns laid down for other commodities, as for example, Sunkist, Ocean Spray, and Sue-Bee Honey.

Cooperation with the National Council of Farmer Cooperatives is planned.

From the Northeast, Al Wenger of Rheems, will serve as the link to the study committee. Pope urged that members give Wenger the benefit of their thinking in the vital field of marketing.

Schedule given for farm bill hearings

WASHINGTON — Sen. Jesse Helms, chairman of the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry, announced specific topics for the series of Farm Bill hearings which start March 2.

The hearings, unless otherwise announced, will be held at the Senate Agriculture Committee, 522 Russell Senate Office Building. Morning sessions will start at 9 a.m. and afternoon hearings at 2 p.m.

On Monday, March 2, the first day of the hearings, Helms and other senators on the committee are expected to make brief, general statements addressing the main areas of public interest in the proposed bill. During the first day's hearing, other members of Congress will be heard, as will general farm organizations.

Agriculture Secretary John R.

Block will make a brief appearance on the second day, and is scheduled for a more detailed presentation later in the month.

Here is a breakdown of topics by date and time:

March 2 — Members of Congress, general farm organizations, morning and afternoon; March 3 — Wheat, morning; March 4 — Feed Grains, afternoon; March 5 — Cotton, morning; March 6 — Sugar, morning; March 9 — Soybeans and rice, morning and afternoon; March 10 — Peanuts, morning.

March 11 — Dairy, morning and afternoon; March 12 — General, morning; March 13 — Livestock, morning; March 16 — Food Stamp Program, morning and afternoon; March 17 — Food Stamp Program, morning; March 19 — Rural Development, morning.

March 20 — Conservation,

morning; March 23 — Agricultural Exports and the P.L. 480 Program (Food for Peace Program), morning and afternoon; March 24 — Research and Extension, morning; March 25 — Secretary of Agriculture and USDA witnesses, morning and afternoon; and March 25 — Forestry, morning.

The hearings are being held on the reauthorization of basic food and agriculture statutes which expire this year. Hearings will focus on current law and farm programs administered by the U.S. Department of Agriculture as well as other issues. Helms said.

Citizens desiring to testify should contact Agriculture Committee Chief Clerk Mac McCarthy at (202) 224-0013, or Hearing Clerk Denise Alexander at (202) 224-0014.