

## If stray dogs attack livestock, contact PDA

HARRISBURG — Farmers have a place to turn for help if their livestock, sheep or poultry are attacked by dogs, according to the Pennsylvania Agriculture Department's Bureau of Dog Law Enforcement.

Under Act 437, the Dog Law of 1965, farmers can be reimbursed for damages or loss by dogs to any livestock, sheep or poultry, or to game birds raised in captivity. The program also covers losses to farmers as a result of rabies, which has a low incidence in Pennsylvania.

Donald R. Moul, director of the Bureau of Dog Law Enforcement,

said, "The Bureau processed 851 damage claims last year and paid farmers more than \$51,000. Many more claims go unreported because farmers do not know the program exists."

Farmers should immediately contact the State Dog Law Enforcement Officer for their county or the nearest PDA regional office when they sustain losses they believe were caused by dogs, he said.

A dog law officer will investigate the claim to determine if it was dog related and will try to locate the owner of the dog involved.

"More than 80 percent of

damage claims investigated were caused by pets, not strays," Moul indicated.

Dog owners, if located, are responsible for reimbursing farmers for their losses. The owners will also be prosecuted under the state dog law for letting their animals run at large and can face fines of \$100 to \$300 plus court costs.

"If a dog owner can't be found," Moul said, "a farmer will be paid the fair market value for his

animal or animals from state funds allocated to this indemnity program."

Moul emphasized that to be eligible for payments under the program, farmers must have licenses for dogs they own or keep.

"Under the law, we can not settle a claim if a farmer owns or harbors an unlicensed dog, even if the animal is a house pet and never goes outside," he said.

The dog law states that all dogs

six months of age or older must be licensed before January 15 each year. Moul noted that 1981 dog licenses are still available and may be purchased at the County Treasurer's Office.

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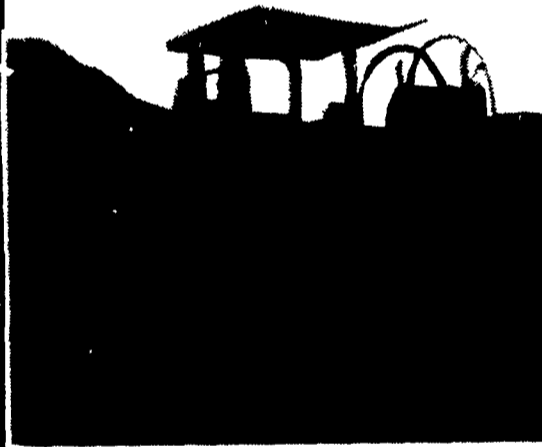
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