

Free plant disease clinic aids farmers, gardeners

UNIVERSITY PARK — If sick plants had brains and could walk, they would most likely head for the Penn State campus. Penn State, you see, has a good thing going for plants — a disease clinic that is the only one of its kind in Pennsylvania. And the service is free.

The Penn State Plant Disease Clinic is equipped to diagnose problems caused by fungi, bacteria, nematodes, viruses, and air pollutants. Available to anyone with plant problems, the clinic operates within the Department of Plant Pathology, College of Agriculture. It complements the regular soil and foliage testing laboratories on the campus.

The staff includes all Extension specialists within the department. Manager is John D. Peplinski, senior research aide.

Clinic facilities include a laboratory for microscopic examination of diseased plants. The lab can also isolate and grow plant pathogens (disease organisms). Moreover, virus analysis is carried out using certain plants called "indicator

plants" that readily show disease symptoms. Viruses are also detected with a technique known as ELISA, an acronym for the scientific name of enzyme-linked immunosorbent assay.

If the plant pathology staff finds that diseases and air pollutants are not involved in a problem, then Extension specialists are consulted in other departments — entomology, agronomy, horticulture, and forestry.

Many plant specimens are received from other states, Peplinski said. The Penn States also cooperate with workers in several other university clinics of the Northeast to help understand and solve plant problems.

About 1800 specimens are processed by the clinic in a year. Of these, some 50 percent come from commercial operations and the other 50 percent from homeowners.

"Of all specimens received, 35 percent are referred to us by county Extension agents," Peplinski commented. "The



Problems of the growing season are now coming into the Plant Disease Clinic at Penn State. Here a twig from a pine tree is examined by John D. Peplinski, clinic manager. Specimens of all sorts are placed under the

dissecting microscope, left, to determine if the problem is caused by fungi, insects, or other conditions. This twig had a disease called pine tip blight.

USDA suspends Pa. livestock operators

NEW YORK, N.Y. — Edward E. Rellick, Indiana, has been suspended by the U.S. Department of Agriculture and ordered to stop violating fair trade practice requirements of the Packers and Stockyards Act. The suspension, which began June 1, is for eight months.

Rellick, registered with USDA as a market agency to buy livestock in commerce on a commission basis, operates in western Pennsylvania.

Three other Pennsylvania livestock operators also have been suspended. Their suspension, which begins June 3, is for 21 days.

Named in the order are: Robert B. Stainbrook, Patricia E. Loomis and William G. Doyle. All three are registered with USDA as a market agency to sell livestock in commerce. They do business as Mercer Livestock Auction, Mercer, operating in western Pennsylvania.

Administrative Law Judge Victor Palmer ordered the four operators to cease and desist from

— engaging directly or indirectly in any practice to obtain money from buyers or sellers of livestock under false pretenses;

— misrepresenting or helping to misrepresent the place where a purchase or sale was made or the procedures involved in those transactions; and

— making or issuing any sales documents or collecting on the basis of those documents when they are not correct or do not show the true nature of the transaction.

Judge Palmer also ordered the operators to maintain accurate records which show the true nature of their livestock transactions.

James L. Smith, P&S official, said they consented to the order, waived their right to a hearing and neither admitted nor denied the charges in USDA's administrative complaint.

The P&S Act is a fair trade practices law administered by USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service. It promotes fair and open competition in the marketing of livestock, meat and poultry.

remaining 65 percent are either submitted directly to us by mail, are brought in personally, or come in through faculty and staff members."

Kits are available for submitting plant specimens and soil samples. These Plant Disease Clinic kits are available in room 218, Buckhout Laboratory, University Park, PA 16802 — as well as at all county Extension Service Offices.

Use of the kits is encouraged. A form in each kit, when filled out, provides valuable information to

aid clinic personnel in diagnosing plant disease problems.

A computer information system is used to store and retrieve records of clinic specimens. All records for the past five years have been entered into the system.

"Listing of specimen records can be produced," Peplinski said, "whenever people request information regarding certain diseases or crops. For example, if a listing is needed for all tomato samples received by the clinic in 1980, we can print this list with our

computer terminal."

The computer storage system proved to be a valuable source of information for the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) in its investigation of plant problems reported in the Three Mile Island (TMI) area. Computer listing of plant specimens received by the clinic in 1979 — from counties surrounding TMI — were given to the NRC. The clinic continues to cooperate in diagnosing plant problems referred to the NRC from the TMI area.

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WHEN: Tues., June 23, 1981, 7:30 P.M.

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The program will include GMS Elevator Tom Boyer explaining how GMS works, slides of bulls and their daughters, and viewing of the Conrad herd. Refreshments will be served. More information can be obtained by calling 733-1806.



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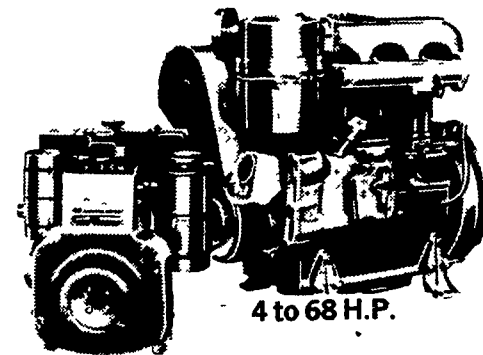
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