

## Experts present disarming facts on animal rights

LANCASTER — Animal-rights and the movement's effect on today's poultry industry captured the attention of more than 40 poultry producers and industry people here at the Holiday Inn on Monday evening.

Pennfield Corporation's John Fidler was the kickoff speaker in this fall's first Poultry Servicemen Seminar. He shared his experiences at the recent Action for Life Conference held in Allentown where animal rights representatives, vegetarians, and animal welfarists converged to discuss strategies and ideals.

Voicing his concern about the potential influence these groups might have on the ag industry, Fidler said these people are "articulate and could surface as strong leaders." He described them as "good people — just misguided" and noted they are pursuing the animal rights issues with a "missionary zeal."

Unlike farmers who understand the need to take care of their production animals if performance is to be achieved, Fidler stressed most of the animal rights people have "no concept of what animal production is like, with no idea what it takes to feed people today and the technology needed to do it."

Most of the poultry producers sighed a breath of relief when Fidler mentioned that for the present time the 'rightists' seem to

be zeroing in on the abuse of laboratory animals, especially rabbits used in testing cosmetics.

However, Fidler commented farmers "will see more and more (animal rights pressures) in the future." He advised the agriculturalists to be aware of the problem and to not be scared. "There are probably some places where we need to improve," he concluded.

Echoing his suggestions for self-evaluation of farm management practices was Penn State professor H. B. Graves. He emphasized that through much of man's history, he has been both predator and prey. Animal domestication, he said, led to today's farming practices where much of the labor is done mechanically with little animal-animal contact or even animal-human contact.

Graves cautioned the producers to be aware of a number of areas that 'rightists' are concerned with: preventing the birds from dusting and roosting due to modern housing conditions; overcrowding; poor ventilation; extreme temperatures, bright lights; force molting, where birds are deprived of adequate food and water for several days; improper debeaking; methods used to destroy chicks; and slaughter methods.

The Penn State animal behaviorist suggested farmers look at economic alternatives to modern production practices by



Pennfield Corporation's John Fidler, right, and Penn State's H.B. Graves presented an animal rights update Monday evening, addressing the Poultry Servicemen here in

Lancaster. The meeting was chaired by Penn State's Owen Keene, Extension poultry specialist, center.

studying the animal's natural behavior and habitat. He recommended that farmers police their own industry and develop

ethics codes.

"You've got to beat them to the punch," he admonished. "You

can't fight this battle in the court of popular appeals or by starving people. You have to disarm the opposition."

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