

Adams poultryman campaigns for family-run farms

BY GINGER SECRIST MYERS
Staff Correspondent
MUMMASBURG — "If I were starting out today, I would not go into the poultry business," exclaims Adams County's Arthur Mussleman, "because the individual operator has lost control over his operation. I would go in if arrangements were made for the producer to have a voice in his contracts, but this won't change as long as there are people out there controlling operations in which eggs are the by-products."
"These operators supply the feed, the birds, and do the marketing. That's three times they have the opportunity to make a

profit at the farmer's expense." This is the dilemma Mussleman sees today in the poultry and livestock industry.
Mussleman and wife Mildred own and operate a 160-acre farm in northern Adams County. The farm supports 12,000 chickens. But tending chickens isn't all the Musslemans are involved in. Recently they were honored by the Adams County Extension Service as the Outstanding Farm Couple for 1982.
The award is presented to individuals who show leadership ability in the community and church and also have sound farm management practices. The

Musslemans receive high marks in all these areas. Both have been actively involved in numerous farm organizations and serve in various positions at the Bethel Mennonite Church. They have four children. Their farm has been in their family for generations, but the future of family farms such as theirs is in grave danger in Mr. Mussleman's opinion.
"When I started in 1946 we had local plants. Now everyone has gone to the integrated operation," laments Mussleman. "You sign the contract that they drew up. The integrated producer is tied up to a contract that was designed by people who have no real interest in the farmer. The broiler operations were the first to go. Now egg production is following and pork production is not far behind."

According to Mussleman this system has ruined the marketing structure of the poultry industry and is taking production control away from the farmer. "It is a sad situation when one farmer survives because another farmer goes out," Mussleman says. "That is what's happening now. Grain producers are losing money and poultry is making money at their expense."

Though very active in numerous farm organizations, Mussleman is quick to point out that he feels they have failed in their support of this issue.

"The farm organizations that exist today have been turning their back on these problems," he observes. "They should be spearheading the drive to get the type of contracts that we should have. Their support of the milk referendum is a prime example. I think their support is wonderful, but we should be getting some attention too," Mussleman also says he feels that financial institutions tie producers into contracts. Having served on the local FmHA Board, Mussleman can cite instances where board approval of loans to poultry producers hinged on market contracts.

Art Mussleman and his wife have a keen appreciation for the past as is evidenced by the beautiful family antiques which decorate their home. But they also



Adams County Poultryman Arthur Mussleman notes that prices received for his eggs this week are down again. This winner of the Leadership Award presented by the Adams County Extension Service is concerned about the future of the poultry business and the survival of the family farm remaining in family control. In front of him hangs the original deed to his farm, dated in the early 1800s and framed in a beautiful antique frame.

see the need for changes in commodity marketing structures and for farmland preservation if young farmers are to be spared from what Mussleman calls "agriculture's mafia." To him these are the big companies that are controlling the farmer and the market through contracts.

Mussleman stresses "agriculture has got to market its product on its own merit. We can't trust our advertising to Madison Avenue. We must educate the consumer and this will take money. This will have to be a cooperative effort between the farmer and the processor. Farmers have done a great selling job among themselves, but not to the public."

Mussleman also emphasizes that high rates in interest and the lack of available land is hurting agriculture across the board. He cites that often where land is limited, a farmer will turn to a confinement operation such as poultry or pork to generate more income. Since these commodities

have no pricing structure, such as milk is marketed under, the market is flooded and the bottom falls out of the price.

Regarding farmland preservation, Mussleman says he's confident that there will be no problem keeping land in agricultural use, "when the prices for farm products gets up to where they should be." Then it will be more profitable for the owner to keep land in agricultural production.

Mussleman admits his fears that the next generation of poultry and livestock farmers will just be hired hands of the big companies.

"The future of the poultry market lies in producing for the market and not to sustain some other operation." For Arthur and Mildred Mussleman that translates into letting the individual farmer control his own operation plus take an active part in marketing his product at a price that is fair to the consumer and at a fair profit to himself.

Heart of Penn goat club plans '82 activities

DORNSIFE — On Sunday, Feb. 7, goat owners from seven counties gathered at Someday Hill Farm, the home of the Donald Molaro family for the monthly meeting of the Heart of Penn Goat Breeders Club.

During the business meeting, the group set up a tentative schedule for 1982 meetings. All meetings will be held the first Sunday of the month, except for holiday weekends, and will include a covered dish supper.

Next month's meeting will be held March 7 at the Dean Showers residence in Allenwood. Members are expected to elect officers and discuss butchering and bologna practices.

At the HPGBC's recent meeting, president David Miller, Helfenstein, appointed three committees. They are: workshop/picnic — Don and Roberta Molaro; show — Dean Showers and Roberta Molaro; dairy month — Rosemary Zartman of Vicksburg.

The group also discussed the annual Easter Kid and Lamb Shipment, slated for the first weekend in April. Members were directed to contact secretary Roberta Molaro as soon as possible with rough counts on their consignments. Prices will range from 90 cents to \$1.15 per live pound depending upon weight and quality.

The club also announced its search for a youth representative. Any boy or girl between the ages of

14 to 18 is eligible. Goat ownership is not a requirement. Contestants must submit a letter of background, hobbies and interests and a wallet-size photo by May 15 to HPGBC, box 73, Vicksburg, PA 17883. The contest will be held during the club's management workshop and family picnic, Sunday May 23, 11 a.m. at Wolf's Crossroads Picnic Grove north of Augustaville.

Also during the meeting, breeders were introduced to the following new members: Linda Donmoyer, Fredericksburg; Larry and Charlotte Frey, Pitman; Charles and Dorothy Swenea, Lek Hill; Lawrence and Margaret Carl, Trevorton; Joe and Joan Tumolo; Danville; and Carl and Edith Whery, Ashland.

While membership in the group is encouraged for all goat owners in the region surrounding Northumberland County, it is not required to be a member to attend meetings and functions. For more information on the club, its goals or activities, contact Roberta Molaro at 717-758-8359.

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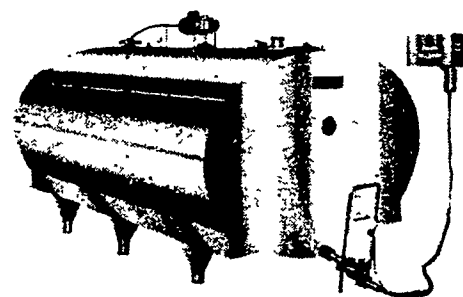
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