

Dairyman blames PP&L for loss of herd

suspects stray voltage

**BY DONNA TOMMELLEO
WILLIAMSPORT** — A Lycoming County dairy farmer said he will sue Pennsylvania Power and Light Company for more than \$1 million for damages in cattle and production losses resulting from severe mastitis that he claimed was caused by stray voltage from PP&L equipment.

As a result, Steven E. Schriener sold his entire milking herd of 600 cows for beef, last month. Schriener recently purchased 37 cows to milk at his father's farm.

According to Schriener's lawyer Mike Casale, Jr., it will be some time before the case actually gets to court. Meanwhile, the Williamsport dairyman has filed for bankruptcy reorganization, which enables him to pay bills and prevents creditor lawsuits and

Farmers' Home Administration foreclosure.

Schriener said he and wife Terry got an electrical shock while milking in their double-seven, computer-operated parlor about two years ago.

The power company was consulted, said Schriener. A PP&L report said at the time the company was not aware of any voltage levels that would be harmful to cows. The electrical system was checked, readings were taken and additional grounding was put in.

But Schriener said his problem persisted. He said cows kept getting shocked, not only in the parlor but in the barnyard as well and could not eat or drink from the stainless steel bunks and troughs.

Shortly before Christmas 1981, Schriener called PP&L and said the

shock problems continued. Upon investigating the Schriener farm, the PP & L report said the company took no readings and told Schriener the system was operating normally.

However, Schriener said his cows, beset with health problems, began dying at an alarming rate. In a two-week period, the 26-year-old farmer lost 44 cows. In the parlor, the herd was averaging a little more than 20 pounds a day.

In January 1982, PP&L again visited the farm and advised Schriener to look into purchasing an isolation transformer.

But Schriener said the advice came too late.

"Already seventy-five cows had died. The herd was ruined," he said.

By late January, Steve Schriener quit shipping milk. In all, 100 cows had died and by mid-February the remainder of the herd was sold for beef.

The final PP&L reading at the Schriener farm on Feb. 4 disclosed voltages that ranged from .5 to 1.98. According to the report, if a cow had been connected to the milking machine under full load conditions, the readings would have been 1.42 volts.

According to Penn State Extension agriculture engineer Joe McCurdy, it does not take much voltage to create a problem. One volt often creates an immediate response in most cows.

If a cow makes contact at two points, one at neutral voltage and the other near the true ground (possible the milking parlor floor), the result is a flow of current through her body. The cow creates a point of contact by touching the sides of the stall, eating grain from a metal feeder, or drinking from a water bowl, says McCurdy.

A milking machine operator will seldom feel these voltages because of his or her body resistance and the insulating materials of boots and dry socks.

"Cows are much more sensitive than humans," said McCurdy.

They do not have the luxury of insulated footwear — the combination of four bare feet on wet concrete and low body resistance allow the stray voltage to create a response at a very low level.

Stray voltage problems may have existed to some degree for many years, said McCurdy, but increased loads on rural distribution systems and greater exposure of dairy herds in milking parlors and on milking lines in modern dairy operations cause new problems and concerns.

Except for young stock, the Steven Schriener farm is quiet, these days. Five full silos out of nine is more than enough to keep his new herd of 37 cows fed. Isolation transformers have been installed at both his farm and his father's, where the new herd is averaging 60 pounds of milk a day.

Both he and wife Terry admitted that neither one wants to expand the operation to its previous size, however Schriener said he expects to put on another 100 cows in the next month.

MANAGE YOUR MARKETS.

GET OUT OF DEBT. CALL TRADE TECH.

We have investors that will put money in your farm operation. You free yourself from debt, keep your farmland and continue to manage your own operation.

We can also help you manage when to sell hogs and steers and when to buy corn and soybeans to make a profit. Call to see if you qualify. All inquiries held in strict confidence.

For more information write to
Trade Tech Management, Inc.
1020 Stony Battery Road,
Lancaster, PA 17601
or call (717) 898-0139

TRADE TECH
MANAGEMENT, INC.

**MILLER
DIESEL INC.**

6030 Jonestown Rd.
Harrisburg Pa. 17112
717-545-5931
Interstate 81 Exit 86

**ASSOCIATION OF
DIESEL SPECIALISTS**

Diesel fuel injection and turbo-charger specialists.
Locally owned and operated
with over 25 years in business.

Authorized Sale & Service For:

- American Bosch
- Robert Bosch
- Rovers Master
- Airesearch
- CAV
- Simms
- RotoMaster
- Schwitzer

We Also Service:

- IHC • Caterpillar • Cummins
- General Motors injectors • Allis Chalmers
- Blowers, governors etc. • Bacharach Tools

Daily Shipments by UPS, Parcel Post, or our representative who is in area regularly.

This publication
is available in microform.

University Microfilms International

300 North Zeeb Road
Dept. PR
Ann Arbor, MI 48106
USA

3032 Mortimer Street
Dept. PR
London W1N 7RA
England

Potato referendum

(Continued from Page A1)

Many grower's echoed MacKenzie's sentiments and said a cut-back in research could only hinder the revitalization of the Eastern potato.

"With transportation costs all but prohibitive and the population of the Northeast being so large, our position becomes more vital to all," said Somerset County grower William Ringler.

"Energy will be conserved, the public served and the grower can continue if we develop new varieties and find new and better ways to produce and market the potato," Ringler added.

While lack of federal funds contributed to the programs problems, some producers agreed the "New Federalism," would be

more beneficial in the long run.

"We get more use of our dollars if closer control can be maintained on a more local or state scale," commented Ray Friedline, also of Somerset County.

"If at some future time, additional funds would be needed for research and development — additional assessments should be made," Friedline said.

Erie County producer Glenn Troyer admitted that while government support of agriculture research is desirable, the ballooning federal deficit is not.

"Support of the Pennsylvania potato industry, at least in part, by those in the industry is a sensible approach to better business and less government dependency," Troyer concluded.

Every penny helps

In the past six years, Pennsylvania's 300 potato growers have helped support the state's potato research program with their penny per hundredweight chip-in. Now, threatened by a halt of state and federal funds, which amount to a \$100,000 annual loss, the growers will vote next month to raise their assessment to two cents.

David MacKenzie, plant pathologist at Penn State and director of the research program, presented the following testimony at Tuesday's hearing which outlined significant contributions from the research order.

✓ The state's research marketing order has permitted the development of the Potato Research Seed Farm located in Centre County on the Allegheny Plateau. The 100-acre farm is geared toward a long-range effort to develop replacement varieties for the state's potato industry. The 40 foot by 40 foot barn houses the necessary supplies which has allowed the research program to cultivate, evaluate and perpetuate one of the finest collections of potato germplasm available in the world.

✓ The Potato Storage Facility, two miles from the Seed Farm, is a renovated Navy Test Lab located at Black Moshannon State Park. The environmentally controlled facilities provide excellent long-term storage of named potato varieties and valuable breeding material that dates back 35 years.

✓ The Potato Quality Lab, located at Penn State's Rock Springs Experimental Station, permits continuing genetic evaluation of new potato clones for processing and culinary qualities. Clones can be tested for chipping quality after low-temperature storage, content of dry matter by specific gravity measurement, boiling characteristics and microwave use.

Stir Your Manure Pit With This Bull-Strong Propeller & Chopping Knife

You now take many hours to stir the solids into pumpable slurry when you want to haul manure. Maybe days. And unfortunately, your present equipment can't get all the solids out.

If that sounds like your problem, you'll want to call for a rental pump from US Farm Systems of Pennsylvania. This pump has a propeller and chopping knife combination that changes direction independently of the discharge nozzle. For example, you can splash the top crust to the right while the propeller under the surface pushes waves of mixing slurry to the left.

To get more information about how this rental pump can help you get a nasty job done this spring write:
US Farm Systems of Pennsylvania
3053 Barren Rd., Oxford, PA 19363
or call 301-398-2948

**US FARM
SYSTEMS**
of Pennsylvania
Your Manure and Feed Equipment Distributor