

USDA improves handling of crop insurance claims

WASHINGTON, D.C. — To get claims handled quicker with fewer errors, the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Federal Crop Insurance Corporation will provide new training for 4,500 contracted crop loss adjusters this year.

Merritt Sprague, manager of the USDA insurance agency, said the training already has begun and will be completed by April 14 in 122 locations. One goal, he said, is to cut down the average time it takes to handle a claim to 30 days. The average was 45 days in 1981.

Sprague said the corporation expects to significantly reduce the number of errors made through the mandatory certification of all loss adjusters and field personnel. For the 1981 crop year, the error rate on the claim forms was 8 percent.

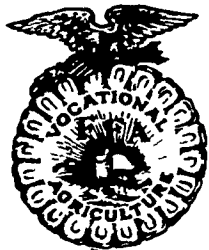
Crop loss claims are not adjusted by regular USDA employees. The corporation contracts with adjusters to do the work.

The corporation will employ no adjusters to perform field in-

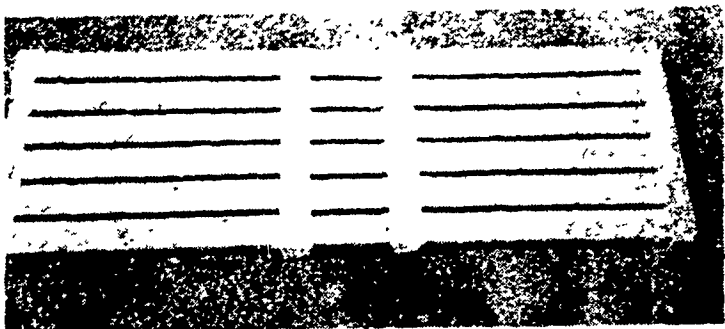
spection without supervision until they successfully complete the course of study, said Sprague. All administrative and supervisory personnel of the corporation also will be required to attend the training.

Recently, the corporation completed a three-month push to certify all agents contracted to sell crop insurance.

"Crop insurance is complex," said Sprague. "We want to be able to guarantee the farmer the best and most professional service possible."



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been done free of charge to introduce it to the public.

Shenk mentioned that feed formulations usually require blending of hay or other forages, silage, soybean oil meal, corn, and other ingredients into a balance ration, both nutritionally and economically.

"With proper educational programs directed to buyers and sellers, the system can have great potential for improving hay marketing," Shenk stated.

"Farmers would never think of buying cow feed or fertilizer without knowing its analysis. The same farmers are concerned over current gambling at the forage market or with their homegrown feeds," he affirmed.

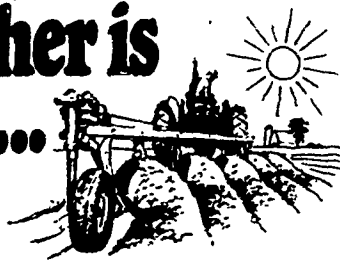
Cooperative Extension Service specialists at Penn State will initiate a field study this year to determine future approaches for using computer analysis and feed programming at the local level. This evaluation will be carried out

with the mobile van in the Pennsylvania counties of Centre, Huntingdon, Mifflin, Cumberland, and Franklin.

Technology and computer programs for the new process were developed over several years by scientists and Extension specialists at Penn State and the Regional Pasture Research Laboratory of the U.S. Department of Agriculture at University Park.

Traditional chemical labs will continue to be an essential part of the new technology, it was noted. Laboratory analysis is needed to calibrate equipment, carry out periodic evaluations of accuracy, and determine the nutritive qualities of the less commonly used feedstuffs. Such labs will make complete mineral analyses of problem samples.

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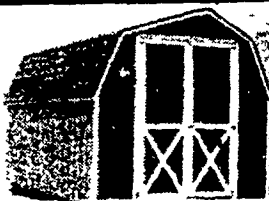
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