

Berks announces Extension promotions

LEESPORT — Berks County Extension Director Herbert A. Wetzel announces the promotion of three staff members, effective July 1.

Those promoted were Herbert A. Wetzel, from Extension Agent to Senior Extension Agent; Fay B. Strickler, from Extension Agent to Senior Extension Agent; and Richard S. Kauffman, from Assistant Extension Agent to Associate Extension Agent. Additionally, Diane V. Brown, Extension Home Economist for the S.E. Region, was promoted from Extension Agent to Senior Extension Agent.

Senior Extension Agent is the

highest rank in the Pennsylvania Cooperative Extension Service.

Wetzel has been with the Extension Service for 25 years and has been with the Berks County Extension Service since February, 1961. He is responsible for providing educational information on fruit and vegetable production, mushrooms, agronomy, and Christmas trees. The fruit and Christmas tree programs are conducted on a regional basis.

Fay Strickler joined the county staff in 1972 as Extension Home Economist. She has previously been employed as Home Service Director for U.G.I. Corporation in the Lancaster Division.

As coordinator of the Family Living Program, Fay provides leadership for 23 Homemakers Groups, and conducts programs in foods, nutrition, housing, financial management and health. She also supervises the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program which serves approximately 175 low-income families in Berks County.

Richard S. Kauffman, Berks County 4-H Coordinator, was appointed a Penn State Extension Agent in October of 1979. He previously served a year as a county Extension Assistant, in which he developed programs in recreation and health.

As Berks 4-H Coordinator, Kauffman is responsible for overall program maintenance, 4-H staff supervision, adult and teen volunteer leader development, provides guidance for the Berks County 4-H Development Board and its committees. He also is responsible for 4-H club development and implementing adults and teens into the local 4-H club program.

On the State level, Kauffman is currently Secretary of the PA Association of Extension 4-H Agents and Treasurer of the Eastern Pa 4-H Camping Association.

Diane Brown, S.E. Regional Extension Home Economist, was also promoted to Senior Extension Agent. Ms. Brown, a native of Maryland, has spent her entire

career working for the Cooperative Extension Service in four states in a variety of positions. Currently she provides educational programs in eight counties in the Southeast Region on food economics, financial resource

management, housing, equipment, and energy related topics.

Diane is currently enrolled in a Doctoral program at Penn State University, working toward a Doctorate of Education in the Department of Adult Education.

Bleach digests

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from attack by microorganisms — and chemists.

"Numerous pretreatments have been developed to increase the susceptibility of cellulose in agricultural residues and wood to digestion by enzymes," Gould says. "These pretreatments all seem to have some major drawback. Most do not increase digestibility to the maximum possible. The few that do allow maximum digestion use too much fuel, use expensive or toxic chemicals, or generate toxic products."

Alkaline hydrogen peroxide dissolved most of the hemicellulose and more than half the lignin in chopped wheat straw within 12 hours, Gould says. The treatment also "opened" a crystalline, indigestible part of the cellulose to digestion by an enzyme from the fungus, *Trichoderma*. The enzyme converted more than 95 percent of the cellulose in the treated straw to glucose sugar. It converted less than 20 percent of

the cellulose in untreated straw to the sugar.

A yeast, *Saccharomyces*, converted the glucose to ethyl alcohol, yielding about 90 percent of all the alcohol that the straw cellulose could produce. Gould compared the yeast's growth and alcohol production on the cellulose, on a medium containing the dissolved lignin and on a conventional fermentation medium. "Neither the lignin-containing solution nor the treated cellulose appeared to be in any way toxic or inhibitory to the yeast's growth or ethanol production," he says.

"This is especially important since peroxide-treated crop residues may find use as high energy feeds for ruminants."

Insoluble material, mostly lignin, remaining after both peroxide treatment and enzymic digestion amounted to 7 percent of the original straw. "In other words," Gould says, "93 percent of the original straw was solubilized by the combined treatment with alkaline peroxide and *Trichoderma* enzyme."

"The new lignin products formed during the peroxide reaction include low molecular weight carboxylic acids. They have potential as chemical feedstocks." Formation of these products instead of phenolic acids formed in other treatments may account for the lack of toxicity in lignin dissolved in the peroxide treatment, Gould says.

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