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Dairy Computer conference keys in on management

BY TRISH WILLIAMS

UNIVERSITY PARK — Computers... the farm management tool of the 80's, was the subject of the Penn State Dairy Computer Conference held Wednesday and Thursday at Penn State's main campus. Approximately 170 dairymen, agribusinessmen and dairy Extension agents came to learn the state of art in this rapidly changing technology.

"The computer is the most recent development that allows dairy farmers to be more efficient managers of their varied resources," said Jud Heinrichs, program chairman for the conference. "The fast pace and change of this computer technology creates the need for this computer."

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State of the art computers were on display for farmers to view and purchase at the Penn State Dairy Computer Conference.

1200 attend Mid-Atlantic no-till meeting

BY LAURA ENGLAND

TIMONIUM, MD. — Conservation tillage is becoming more important and is one of the fastest growing agricultural practices in the country, said the chief of the USDA Soil Conservation Service.

In speaking to a crowd of 1200 attending the Mid-Atlantic No-Till Conference in Timonium, Md., Peter C. Myers said that an estimated 100 million acres of cropland were farmed under some form of conservation tillage this year. Leading the states in conservation tillage practices were Delaware and Maryland, each with over 69 percent of cropland involved.

Myers said that the USDA stresses conservation tillage and no-till practices because of its cost-effective approach to conservation.

"Conservation tillage results in good crop yields and at the same time keeps the soil in place," he said, "thus reducing soil erosion and sedimentation."

Through no-till practices, Myers said soil erosion can be eliminated, but the key to this is management. "The bottom line is management," he said, "and if you don't want to make it (conservation tillage) work, it won't."

Successful no-till farmers have taken soil problems and through conservation tillage have eliminated these problems, Myers said. At the same time, the farmers have seen increased crop yields.

Although conservation tillage has proved beneficial in reducing soil erosion, Myers said that some people are concerned with water pollution due to the increased use of insecticides and herbicides

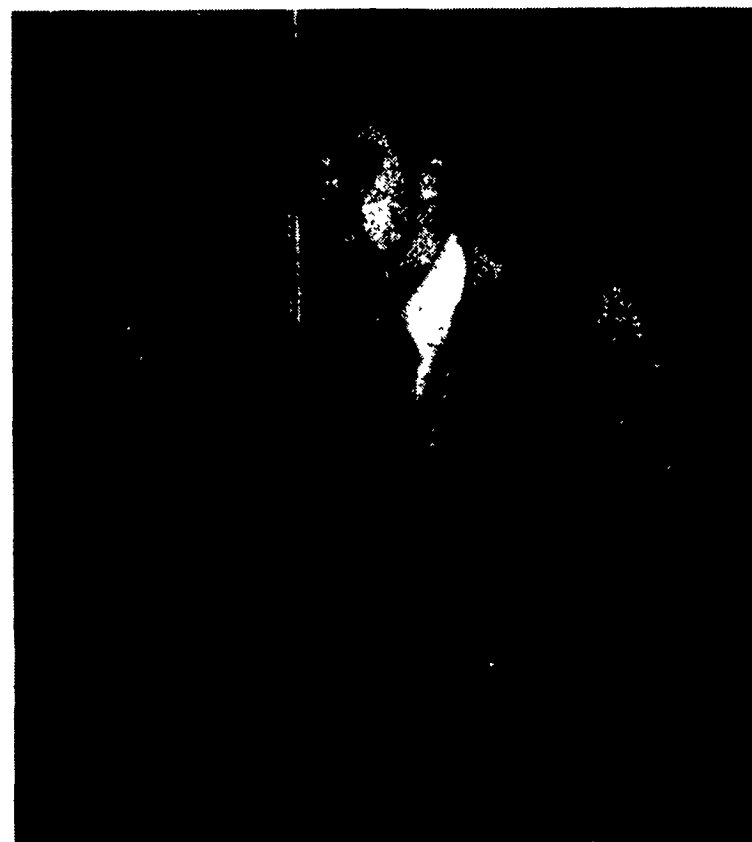
associated with till planting. "This is something we need to think about," Myers said, "and that scientists at 36 USDA research facilities are working on answers about conservation tillage and no-till."

Nine other speakers also addressed the group and spoke on topics including the economics of no-till, no-till forage establishment, selection and operation of no-till equipment, and crop protection with integrated pest management.

The speakers and highlights of their topics follow.

V. Allan Bandel, extension soils specialist at the University of

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Keynote speaker, Peter C. Myers, chief of the USDA Soil Conservation Service, says conservation tillage is one of the fastest growing agricultural practices in the country.



Photo by Trish Williams

Flooding in fields and along roads caused more than 30 roads to be closed in Lancaster Co.

Rain late, but welcomed

BY KIMBERLY HERR

Where was it when we needed it? That question echoed across the state earlier this week as the rain, missing from this summer's weather, pelted across the Commonwealth.

After the soaking rains of Monday and Tuesday, Lancaster County, which suffered from the severe drought over the summer, recorded a total rainfall of five inches. According to Jay Irwin, Lancaster County Extension agent, that rain helped more than it hurt.

"You always need good soil and subsoil moisture going into win-

ter," Irwin explained. "This will certainly help that. Since the ground is not frozen, the water is going down into the ground."

"This should help the water table considerably," he said.

The problems that the rain caused for farmers were few.

"There were some high streams, but no major problems that I've heard of," Irwin said.

Another county suffering from this summer's drought conditions was Schuylkill. Allen Shoener, county Extension agent, was glad to see the rain.

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Avian flu total reaches 6 million

BY LAURA ENGLAND

LANCASTER — Despite efforts by USDA task force personnel sent to eradicate the deadly avian flu virus, the disease continued to spread within the quarantine zone this week, leaving behind over six million "depopulated" chickens.

As of Thursday, 151 flocks had been confirmed with the highly pathogenic strain. Of these flocks, 126 had been depopulated by task force members, bringing the number of birds destroyed to 6,760,950.

The overall outlook of the avian epidemic continues to be the same, said Pennsylvania Poultry Federation director John Hoffman.

"The overall outlook is the same," Hoffman said. "We continue to contain the disease within the quarantine zone, but

we've made no progress in controlling the virus."

Currently, the disease is moving eastward with northern and southern movement infrequent. The trend eastward, Hoffman said, is a result from the lack of birds in the western end of the quarantine zone. In this area, most birds have been depopulated.

The spread eastward has caused concern among avian flu personnel because the hot strain is hitting areas where no previous cases had been reported. The easternmost outbreak in Lancaster County occurred in Gap, while Reinholds is the furthest north the disease has gone and Quarryville the furthest south.

The quarantine zone covers 2,800 square miles, including all of Lancaster County and parts of Berks, Dauphin, Lebanon

and Chester counties. The quarantine went into effect mid-October when the highly pathogenic strain of avian flu had been diagnosed in area chicken flocks.

Lancaster County, which represents 40 percent of the state's \$400 million poultry industry, has been hardest hit. Over 130 of the hot flocks have been in the county.

In other developments, Hoffman said a task force committee met Thursday morning to discuss the problem of cleaning and disinfecting poultry houses after depopulation. Poultrymen had said at a recent meeting that requirements were too strict, and they couldn't meet the "hospital clean" specifications.

While cleaning requirements will remain strict, some changes in

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