

# Lancaster Farming

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## Pa. to fund studies of manure/energy farmer co-ops

*Is it feasible?*

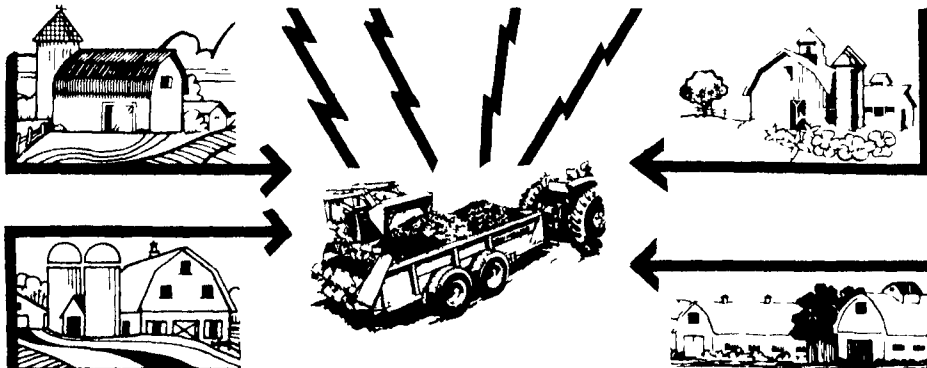
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Is it feasible for several farmers to get together in a co-op and pool their manure for utilization in a centralized methane digester to generate electrical power?

From a technological and possibly an economical standpoint it is feasible, according to a representative of the firm that designed and installed the digester system for Turkey Hill Dairies in Lancaster County -- the first ag bio-gas system which has regularly sold power back to a utility in Pennsylvania.

"We have found that the system does provide a cash flow at the present rate of sell-back of power to the utility," said Larry Pluta, of RCM (Resource Conservation Management.)

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Under energy co-op proposal, manure from several farms would be collected, instead of spread on fields, and utilized in a centralized methane digester for the generation of electrical power to be sold back to utility.

HARRISBURG — Pennsylvania is seeking to fund some studies to determine if farmers can get together to form a new type of co-op — one in which they pool their manure in a joint venture to generate energy through a cooperative methane digester system.

A total of \$35,000 is being made available through the Governor's Energy Council to finance such studies to determine if it is feasible of having anaerobic digester systems which would utilize animal wastes from more than one farm.

The deadline for proposals to conduct such studies under the Council's cost-sharing funding program is March 9.

Under the program, the Council will provide a maximum contribution of \$10,000 or 80 percent of the total cost of a study, whichever is less. Applicants must provide a minimum of 20 percent of the total cost of any study.

Recognizing that such digester systems already in operation in the state are found on large farms, such as Mason-Dixon in Adams County and Oregon and Turkey Hill dairies in Lancaster County, the chief purpose of the studies is to encourage the development of cooperative digester projects among smaller farmers whose animal herds by themselves would not support a project alone.

The Governor's Energy Council lists three main advantages of the co-op digester projects for farmers.

First, they could produce a significant share of their own energy needs.

Second, continuing income could be gained from the sale-back of energy to a utility.

Third, digesters help reduce nutrient run-off problems resulting from customary waste disposal on the land.

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## Beef cattle outlook for 1984 is positive

BY LAURA ENGLAND

LANCASTER — The beef cattle industry is experiencing some changing times, but economic factors are positive and 1984 should be a fairly good year for Pennsylvania cattlemen, according to a Penn State Extension meats specialist.

This was the outlook given by William Henning, one of four beef specialists speaking at the Lancaster County Cattle Feeder's Day Tuesday. "We're in some changing times and even the economists would agree," Henning said, "but all factors of the economy look positive now."

Although not an economist himself, Henning predicted, through studying demand and supply factors, that the first quarter of 1984 will show the strongest beef prices. The average should be close to \$70 per hundredweight, he said.

The second quarter will be somewhat lower, with prices in the mid 60's. A backup of feeder cattle

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Speaking to the 150 cattlemen attending the Lancaster Cattle Feeder's Day were, from left, Les Burdette, Penn State Extension beef specialist; J. Paul Espy, cattle feeder and Pa. Beef Council president; William Henning, Penn State Extension meats specialist; and Dr. Tom Drake, Penn State Extension veterinarian.

## Lancaster Farm & Home directors



Newly-elected directors of the Farm and Home Foundation of Lancaster County are, from the left, Robert C. Groff, Quarryville; Darvin E. Boyd, Akron; Mrs. Orpha Graybill, Lititz; Mrs. Evelyn Hess, Lancaster; Kenneth Rutt, Quarryville; Robert Gregory, Lititz; and George Lewis, Mount Joy. See story on A24.

## Poultrymen take Avian funds appeal to Washington hearing

BY LAURA ENGLAND

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Pennsylvania poultrymen battling the worst outbreak of avian influenza in the country, crowded into a U.S. Senate hearing room Thursday seeking additional federal aid to compensate for mounting bird losses.

Over 100 Lancaster County poultrymen were part of a standing-room-only crowd seeking an additional \$61 million to meet the fair market value of the over 10 million birds slaughtered to eradicate the disease. The additional funds would cover the fair market value based on current egg and feed markets and the productive life of the birds.

According to Pennsylvania Sen. John Heinz, testifying on behalf of

the poultrymen, the "fair market value is the only solution" to the financial needs of the farmers.

"The Pennsylvania farmers are only asking what the law mandates and that's fair market compensation," Heinz said.

Without fair market value, Heinz added, he sees no future for the state's poultry industry. Other funding sources, such as low interest loans, have been considered, he said, but are not viable solutions because poultrymen "can't bear the burden of loan payments."

"Equity demands fair market value," Heinz said as he cited the USDA fair market program for the 1972 Newcastle outbreak in California. At that time, poultrymen received supplemental funds as well as the fair market

value for their birds, he said.

The hearing Thursday came at a critical time with the decision to eradicate all birds associated with the Pennsylvania avian flu virus, said U.S. Sen. Arlen Specter, R-Pa.

The USDA announced Wednesday its decision to depopulate all poultry flocks infected by the H5 strain of the virus which has hit the state's poultry industry.

Heinz, who met earlier with Sen. Specter and assistant Secretary of Agriculture C.W. McMillan, expressed his concerns of the decision to eradicate all low and high pathogenic flocks.

"It needs to be proven beyond reasonable doubt," he said, "that the mild strain must be eradicated

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