

No deposit, no return: no good for Pa. farmers

BY JACK HUBLEY
QUARRYVILLE — Bill Heidelbaugh is tired. Tired of flat tires and damaged equipment, tired of wasting precious time picking up after careless motorists, and tired of worrying about what a few members of his 40-cow dairy herd might have had for lunch.

The problem is roadside litter, and on Monday morning Heidelbaugh and the Lancaster County Farmers' Association took action to alert the public to the gravity of the situation.

After bagging litter along a half-mile stretch of Route 372 just west of Quarryville, more than 20 farmers congregated at the Heidelbaugh farm to consolidate the spoils and voice their disgust to the media.

What the farmers had accumulated in this short stretch of rural road was an incredible assortment of junk filling 10 100-pound feed sacks, and capable of doing considerable damage to farm vehicles and livestock.

Some of the worst offenders are the glass bottles that are soon transformed to broken glass when hurled from a car window. In 1983 Heidelbaugh's vehicles suffered three flat tires due to broken bottles in his fields, one of which necessitated the replacement of an expensive tire. Even when the glass is plowed under, it tends to work back to the surface, once again ready to ambush a tractor tire.

Robert Kreider, another Quarryville area dairy farmer, reports similar problems during 1983, experiencing one flat tire each, on a tractor, wagon and mower.

Though not as hazardous to tires, discarded aluminum cans can

cause serious problems for livestock.

"Just this past week I picked both of these out of a bale of hay," Heidelbaugh said, holding out a pair of flattened beverage cans.

Although most animals won't eat the entire cans, aluminum fragments and pull-tabs often find their way into hay bales and silage, and later into a cow's digestive system where they can puncture the stomach.

Magnets placed in a cow's stomach to collect hardware have no effect on aluminum or glass, leaving these materials free to do damage. The result is often loss of appetite and steady deterioration, and ultimately a trip to the slaughterhouse.

With good dairy cattle costing \$1000 and up, the farmer takes a considerable loss when a once-productive cow brings \$500 for slaughter. Heidelbaugh lost one cow in 1982 due to ingested hardware.

Other complications can arise from livestock stepping on sharp-edged objects. Virginia Hess reports fighting a never-ending battle with foot injuries. Assisting her husband Jim in the operation of their Quarryville dairy farm, she finds an occasional cow with a cut foot, despite her best cleanup efforts.

If a dairy cow is treated for an infection with antibiotics for three days, the cow's milk must be discarded for at least six days. Based on a yield of 80 pounds per day, the total loss would be 480 pounds, translating to a cost of at least \$65.

Farmers, of course, aren't the only ones inconvenienced by roadside trash.

"This litter situation is really uncalled for," said East Drumore

Township supervisor Albert Stoner, complaining of the financial burden created through damage to tires, mower blades and the cost of cleanup.

What would these disgruntled citizens recommend as a solution? High on their list of remedies is the passage of the proposed Returnable Beverage Container Act.

Better known as the "bottle bill", this legislation would establish a minimum refund of \$.05 on all glass, metal and plastic beverage containers sold in the state. Since about half of all roadside litter is composed of beverage containers, the farmers maintain that passage of the bill could result in significant reductions in roadside litter.

Opponents of the bill contend that such a law would be bad economics, resulting in a severe blow to the disposable container industry.

Advocates of the "bottle bill" counter by saying that the action will generate enough employment opportunities in the form of transporting and washing returnables, to more than offset losses elsewhere. They also maintain that since beverage containers are the fastest growing component of solid waste, the act would result in considerable savings for municipal solid waste disposal programs.



Holding a pair of flattened beverage cans found in one of his hay bales last week, William Heidelbaugh displays trash collected from a 500-foot stretch of road frontage on his Quarryville farm.

Avian flu cleanup payments made

HARRISBURG — Checks totaling \$279,126.42 have been mailed to the first 60 poultry farmers reimbursed for extraordinary costs associated with the outbreak of avian influenza, according to state Agriculture Secretary Penrose Hollowell.

Hollowell said the 60 farmers

were the first to receive full payment for costs of cleaning and disinfection of their operations. "Applications for these reimbursements are being processed as we receive them," he said. "These and other poultry farmers who have had their C & D approved by the state-federal task force, will

receive full payment upon application.

"Other farmers who plan C & D operations as a result of depopulation by the task force will receive one-half payment when the application is processed and the balance when C & D is approved," he added.

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