

Del. dairy princess spends summer as extension intern

NEWARK, Del. — Mary Lou Parry knew she wanted to teach agriculture, but wasn't sure whether she belonged in a formal high school classroom or in the out-of-school extension system. By the time she graduates from the University of Delaware this December, she'll have a much clearer idea.

Parry, who just completed her reign as Delaware Dairy Princess, is scheduled to student teach this fall. Now she is learning about extension work as the University of Delaware Cooperative Extension Service's first all-around summer student intern.

In the past, extension interns have spent their summers answering questions about gardening or canning, assisting with 4-H programs, or helping in the fields. Parry is the first to work in all these areas, and others besides.

With her farm background, her experience as dairy princess, and the broad range of courses she has taken as an agricultural education major, Parry is equally comfortable teaching artificial insemination, explaining the nutritional value of yogurt, or answering a gardener's question about blossom end rot. Until this summer she wasn't sure which aspect of agricultural education she preferred. To help her find out, extension service administrators Dr. Samuel Gwinn and Dr. Richard Fowler assigned her to a variety of duties in the New Castle and Kent County extension offices, for which she received both academic credit and a small salary.

In June, as the 1983-1984 school year was drawing to a close, Parry's first task was to visit New Castle County elementary schools that had been growing chicks through the 4-H embryology project. Next she helped the 4-H office prepare for the annual pumpkin growing contest, the first of many summer projects. Hundreds of children had responded to 4-H's offer of free seeds, fertilizer, and pumpkin-growing in-

structions. Those orders had to be filled, and that's where Parry fit in.

Parry also hoed with 4-H gardeners, helped extension 4-H agent Mark Manno establish a new program for the handicapped, and trained a county 4-H dairy judging team for the Delaware State Fair.

She accompanied extension home economist Debbie Amsden on nutrition lectures, and county agent Dean Belt on farm visits.

At the Delaware State Fair in July, she completed her official duties as out-going dairy princess,

then lent a hand with the farm animals on display.

During the latter part of the summer, she answered Kent County homeowners' gardening questions and helped county agents Dave Woodward and Bob Hochmuth analyze crop production problems in local fields. Before speaking up themselves, the agents often let Parry draw her own conclusions about the particular disease, insect or nutritional imbalance that could be causing trouble. She also accompanied extension environmental specialist Ross Harris

on farm visits as he showed farmers safe methods of manure handling and storage.

Parry concluded the summer at New Castle County's 4-H day camp, teaching a class for would-be veterinarians. She showed her young students that loving animals is not enough. They also had to be willing to dissect a chicken and artificially inseminate a cow. Some of the children are now rethinking their career plans.

In the process, Parry refined her own career goals. Of all her extension activities, she most

preferred trouble-shooting in the fields. But since it takes a graduate degree to become a county agent, she plans to start as a classroom, agricultural teacher, gradually taking advanced plant science courses at night.

Parry is grateful for the opportunities the summer provided. "Being an intern is one of the best things I could have done this summer," she says. "I learned so much, and I have a much better idea of what I do and don't enjoy." She hopes other students will enjoy the same opportunities.

Dodder is pesky weed in hay

NEWARK, Del. — Many farmers have noticed an orange thread-like weed growing in their clover or alfalfa this summer. Delaware extension agricultural agent Dean Belt says he's had many calls about this pest, which isn't new on Delmarva, but seems to be more troublesome than usual this year. The weed is called dodder.

It is a parasitic plant that germinates from seed and grows in a twisting manner around host plants, often pulling them down to the ground. Dodder sends small root-like projections into these plants and lives off their juices. This is why dodder-infested hay is hard to cure — the dodder is the last thing to dry down.

Often, the first question growers ask Belt is where did the weed come from? Usually it arrives with the legume seed. States have strict laws on how much dodder can be present in clover or alfalfa seed, but it's very difficult to eliminate because of its size. It doesn't take many dodder seeds to create a problem, as one plant may cover an area 10 feet in diameter and seeds can remain dormant for 10 to 20 years.

Livestock which eat hay containing dodder will spread the pest further, since its seed passes

undamaged through the digestive tract. So dodder-infested hay is another way to acquire this pest. Dodder often grows along river and stream banks, which means the seed can be transported from upstream sources during periods of high water.

The parasite requires plenty of moisture to germinate, which is why there's so much of it this year, Belt says.

Controlling dodder isn't easy. Usually farmers can count on dry periods to reduce infestations. When possible, the county agent suggests they try to keep it from spreading by treating small patches as soon as they appear. Small areas can generally be controlled by flaming the patches or by closely mowing and then burning the vegetation. Spot control requires follow-up treatment every two weeks to catch new regrowth.

When dodder is widespread over a field, consider other measures such as rotation into a row crop

that will allow the soil to become dry on the surface and will shade out the weed. Preemergence treatments with Chloro-IPC, Casoron or Dacthal will also help. Check labels to be sure the herbicide selected is cleared for use on the particular crop being treated.

Belt doubts that treatment will be necessary next season, even though dodder was a serious problem in some fields this year. "If we return to more normal spring conditions, you're less likely to see this in your crops again," he says, "unless you irrigate."

Northumberland no-till meeting

REBUCK — The Northumberland County Conservation District is sponsoring a no-till twilight meeting on Thursday from 6:30 - 9:30 p.m. at the Marlin Rothermel farm, Washington Township. The Rothermel farm is located on Township Road T-365 near Rebeck.

The first part of the meeting will be an inspection of Rothermel's no-till corn demonstration plot. Also highlighting the meeting will be presentations by several chemical company and agency representatives on various aspects of no-till planting.

Jeff McClellan, Chevron

Chemical, will speak on designing a no-till cropping system. Neal Orr, Ciba-Geigy, and Steve Fisher, FMC, will speak on no-till weed control and insect problems in no-till, respectively.

Other speakers will include George J. Phillips, Northumberland County Conservation District; Kevin Blake, Soil Conservation Service; and Vernon Brose, Cooperative Extension Service.

For more information on the meeting, call the Northumberland County Conservation District office at 286-6997.

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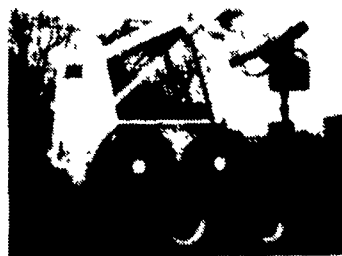
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