

# Farm consultant travels with computer

BY MARGIE FUSCO

**TURBOTVILLE** — Allan Lynch's card should read, "Have computer. Will travel." In his work as a farm consultant, Lynch never stops going. And the farmers he serves are going places, too.

Lynch works for Clark's Ag Center in Turbotville, Northumberland County. His job goes beyond feed sales or forage analysis. He likes to call himself a farm consultant with a dairy speciality, a description that blends his duties and his background.

Lynch travels a five-county area analyzing herd management for dairy farmers. He looks at feed plans and a great deal more, including such elements as feeding

patterns, farm staff and the barn environment. His goal is to help the farmer improve production by farming more efficiently.

On a recent visit to the Bruce Shoch farm in Sunbury, Lynch set up his portable computer terminal on a desk and ran a comparative analysis of how Shoch's 85 lactating cows were producing on different feed balances over the past year.

"I started with Allan's program in December," Shoch says. "Now we're fine-tuning it every month." In January, Shoch went from twice-a-day milkings to three a day. His production rose from 17,000 to 19,500 lbs. He and Lynch are now working together to develop higher butterfat content



Allan Lynch, right, discusses distiller's grain vs. alfalfa costs with Allen Wehr.

"When I get a new customer, I don't just make recommendations," Lynch explains. "I try to visit during milkings and study his books. I want to get to know the herdsman, his attitudes and his feeding strategies."

In addition to his computer services, which produce quick comparisons and on-the-spot analysis, Lynch can offer the services of the forage testing laboratory at Clark's Ag Center. The lab produces results in 24 hours, a service Shoch finds

especially valuable: "By the time I get some analyses back, it's months later; I need to know now, not later."

Like Shoch, Allen Wehr of Joal-Ann Farms, Mifflinburg, Union County, has been pleased with Lynch's visits. In one year, Wehr has upped his herd average from 16,000 to 18,500 lbs. of milk. Now he's wondering about the most cost-effective way to feed his herd.

"Can you put it through the computer and see if it's more economical for me to buy distillers

and brewers grain or to rent some more land and grow alfalfa?" he asks as he talks with Lynch in the barnyard.

Lynch's connections with farming began as a child. He was raised and worked on a family farm. In high school, he sold a heifer to get to Kansas so he could attend the Graham School. When he graduated from high school he worked as a large animal technician for a veterinarian. He joined the Army and worked dual assignments as a medic and a veterinarian's assistant.

His military service took him to Korea, where he spent his spare time as a consultant to an agricultural school. When he returned stateside, Lynch used a Georgia assignment to attend agricultural school at Auburn University. After leaving the service, he helped manage a farm in Maryland, then migrated to Pennsylvania. He's been with Clark's for two years.

He feels the farm consulting service is getting good results for his farmers because it blends personal attention with the newest technology. "Farming is a rough game. Being a nice guy isn't enough in today's tight markets," Lynch says. "It's only the efficient farmer who's going to survive."

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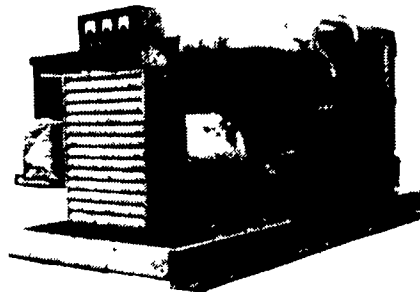
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