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Excessive nitrate levels in drinking water are capable of killing human infants and livestock, said Penn State water quality specialist Joe Makuch.

Nitrate poisoning

Are your family and livestock protected?

BY JACK HUBLEY

LANCASTER — Though human health problems associated with high nitrate content in drinking water are well documented, livestock can suffer as well.

So said Penn State water quality specialist Joe Makuch at a water quality workshop held at Lancaster's Farm and Home Center on Thursday. Makuch was one of four speakers addressing the growing problem of deteriorating water quality. Also featured were Earl Custer of Lancaster Laboratories, and Dr. William Sharp and Dr. Karen Mancl, both of Penn State.

Though nitrates themselves are not detrimental to human or animal health, the problem arises when bacteria in the digestive tract convert nitrates to nitrites. These compounds, in turn, react with hemoglobin in the blood to form methemoglobin, a chemical incapable of transporting oxygen in the bloodstream.

"So the symptoms you get are akin to suffocation," said Makuch, noting that human infants suffering from methemoglobinemia develop a bluish color around their lips and eyes that gradually

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Congress begins conference to finalize 1985 Farm Bill

BY JAMES H. EVERHART
WASHINGTON — Legislators this week began the process of ironing out the differences in the two versions of the 1985 Farm Bill passed by the separate houses of Congress.

A 61-member conference committee created by the Congress began its work on Thursday, attempting to reconcile the differences between the House version of the bill, passed in October, and the Senate Farm Bill approved late last month.

Meanwhile the Reagan Administration is looking on, hoping the legislators will come up with legislation it finds acceptable.

In a statement released this week, USDA Secretary John Block indicated some hope for the Senate version, although he said he had some reservations about the expenditures called for in the bill.

"The bill approved by the Senate does have some sections reflecting good farm policy," Block said in his statement. "However, the bill is still over our budgetary limitations. We look to the conference with guarded optimism and will be working daily with the conference committee in hopes that the committee will put together a bill that the president can sign."

A USDA spokesman indicated that Block's role would be relatively passive, in that the secretary would simply respond to ideas developed by the conference committee, rather than actively lobbying for specific provisions.



E. Kika de la Garza

On the Senate side, the members of the conference committee include Republicans Jesse Helms of North Carolina, Robert Dole of Kansas, Richard Lugar of Indiana, Thad Cochran of Mississippi and Rudy Boeschwitz of Minnesota, and Democrats Edward Zorinsky of Nebraska, Patrick Leahy of Vermont, John Melcher of Montana and David Prior of Arkansas. All the Senate members are on the

Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry.

House Agriculture Committee Chairman E. Kika de la Garza heads the delegation from the House of Representatives. The 52-member House contingent includes all the members of the Ag Committee, as well as several members each from the Ways and Means, Merchant Marine and Foreign Affairs committees. Many of the members will participate only in discussions on their area of experience, Congressional officials said.

The dairy title in the Senate's version of the 1985 Farm Bill would:

- Set the support price at \$11.60 a hundredweight when the bill goes into effect.

- Authorize the Secretary of Agriculture to reduce support prices 50 cents per cwt, beginning Jan. 1, 1987 if purchases are expected to exceed five billion pounds of milk a year.

- Require a \$1.00 a hundredweight price reduction, if

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Dairymen can vote on promotion agency

BY JAMES H. EVERHART

HARRISBURG — The complementary, and competitive, relationships between the various state, local and regional dairy promotion agencies once again comes to the fore this week in Federal Order 4.

Until Dec. 15, Order 4 dairymen may choose which of the various agencies are to receive two thirds of their 15 cents per hundredweight dairy promotion assessment.

Five cents automatically goes to the National Dairy Promotion program, financing an \$80 million campaign of advertising, research, product development and promotion.

The remaining 10 cents per hundredweight can be distributed to the agency of the individual dairyman's choice — and Order 4 dairymen have until Dec. 15 to

make their choice known.

If a dairyman does not indicate a preference, the "local" portion of his allocation will automatically go to the Middle Atlantic Milk Marketing Area (MAMMA) program. The MAMMA agency is responsible for the "Milk is Fitness You Can Drink" campaign, which uses professional sports personalities as celebrity spokesmen for milk.

On the other hand, those who wish to support other local or statewide programs must notify Order 4 Administrator Joseph D. Shine.

Their choices include the statewide "Make it Milk" campaign sponsored by the Pennsylvania Dairy Promotion Program. Currently, 4,000 Pennsylvania dairymen contribute to

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Dauphin Co. assessors reject

Cassel's clean and green appeal

BY JAMES H. EVERHART

HARRISBURG — The Dauphin County Board of Assessment has turned down a "Clean and Green" appeal filed by the chairman of the County Conservation District.

DCCD Chairman Russ Cassel's appeal is confined to the board's assessment of his 290-acre dairy farm in South Hanover Township. But he anticipates that a favorable ruling would affect all of the landowners in the county who have elected to participate in the Statewide Clean and Green Assessment Program.

Cassel is challenging the county Board of Assessment's 1985 Reassessment, which, in effect, simply doubled 1973 assessments of all real estate in the county.

Even though ag land would be valued the same, relative to other property in the county, Cassel contends the reassessment does not comply with the terms of the 1974 act which created the program.

The land, he contends, should

only be reassessed on the use value of the property, which, he says, has not doubled since 1973 — and may, in fact, have dropped.

His proposal would continue the ag land at 100 percent of the 1973 assessment levels rather than the 200 percent set by the assessment board for all Dauphin County real

estate. If accepted, his plan would actually lower taxes paid by farmers participating in the program.

After being informed verbally of the board's rejection of his appeal, Cassel said that he would appeal the decision in county court. He also indicated he would try to interest the state Department of Agriculture in the case, since the decision will affect "clean and green" properties throughout the state.

The case could have wide-ranging impact on similar reassessments in other counties. Neighboring York County, for instance, recently announced plans for a countywide reassessment to begin next year.

Cassel noted in his appeal that use values have not risen in agriculture since 1976, and, in fact, net farm income has dropped by 57 percent, according to the Pennsylvania Dairy Farm Business Analysis Yearly Financial Summaries.



Russ Cassel

Farm Show—it's coming!

HARRISBURG — While most of the country is focusing on the approaching holidays, more than a few farm families are looking just beyond the season's festivities and thinking about the Pennsylvania Farm Show, scheduled for the week of Jan. 12.

And Lancaster Farming is doing its part too, getting

ready for our Annual Farm Show Issue to be published Jan. 11.

We encourage all advertisers and news sources to make sure materials for this issue are forwarded to Lancaster Farming offices as soon as possible. Advertising deadline for the Farm Show Issue is Friday, Dec. 27. News deadline is Monday, Jan. 6, 1986.