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## *Penn State Radio carries Farm Show to those at home*

BY SALLY BAIR

Staff Correspondent

**HARRISBURG** — If you live in Pennsylvania and have heard radio reports from the Farm Show, there's a good chance those reports were compiled by Penn State Radio.

For over 35 years, Penn State's Cooperative Extension Service has been reporting from the Farm Show, as a service to make people aware of agriculture in the state.

Cordell Hatch, professor of ag communications at Penn State and coordinator of radio-television services at Farm Show, says, "The purpose of the radio service is to share Farm Show with the people who can't come and to offer assistance to those who do come. We try to give an impression of what it's all about."

Each day four prepared tapes are made available to over 100 radio stations throughout the state. They include a news summary of the day's events, a preview of the

upcoming day and two features. These "canned" materials are taped, and with a phone call, local stations retape them for use at their convenience. Penn State Radio provides about seven minutes of air time.

Hatch, who has now completed his 29th Farm Show, says that they expect to reach a peak of 500 broadcasts sent out throughout the week. He said their service has expanded through the years as local stations no longer have the budgets to send personnel to cover the event.

In addition to the taped shows, live reports are given throughout the day from the main exhibition area, the large arena and the small arena. These reports are up-to-the-minute results of all the ongoing shows, and are geared for specific areas of the state, usually on a county basis. The live reports are sent out about every 15 to 20 minutes on a sort of conference call among the agents manning the

live booths. Hatch says, "The arena reports are the most popular. These are localized reports telling people back home how the local exhibitors are doing each day."

Computers are being used this year for the first time to speed these reports. Fred Rudy, Dauphin County agent, types the information into the computer and prints copies for the radio reporters. He said, "They used to read from handwritten copies or carbons, so this is a big improvement."

Hatch says the actual production of the tapes is a "triangle," with Penn State extension professionals providing the manpower, the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture/Farm Show Commission providing funds for rental, purchase and maintenance of equipment and stations providing air time.

According to Paul Ruskin, video executive producer for the extension service, the 15 people who produce the radio material work seven days, "a long week." It takes at least a day of setting up equipment and testing, and this year that proved to be a greater challenge because with the divestment of Bell, the usual equipment was not available.

The Farm Show Commission had to purchase equipment for the telephone broadcasts. Ruskin said, "The complexity has increased three fold."

Hatch added, "We not only had to get the new equipment in place, but had to teach the people how to use it. It's like learning to use your first computer." He said the new equipment is the latest available and is the best to meet the specific needs of the Farm Show. Furthermore, after it was used several days, they found the reports were being sent out much more efficiently.

Ruskin said the shows are very popular with the radio stations, especially in rural areas of the state.

Operating out of the same area, with Ruskin in charge, is a video service for television stations. Each year Ruskin shoots general kinds of video tapes to provide background for television reports. Ruskin said, "We make general kinds of footage, with crowd scenes, cattle judging scenes and horse pulling."

At the radio office, located just off the dairy barns near the large arena, television crews are welcome to use the equipment to charge batteries and check tapes they are shooting.

Ruskin explained that county extension workers are also welcome to bring in local winners to be interviewed via direct telephone by their local radio stations. Although there are six phone lines available, there is frequently a long wait to use the phones because of the extensive number of tapes being sent out. In addition to interviews Hatch noted that many agents give their own personalized radio reports to stations in their home areas.

Although the radio team works long hours, Ruskin said, "There's a great esprit de corps here. People come back year after year."

Hatch agrees, "The people on the radio committee say that nobody at the Farm Show works any harder than we do, but we all enjoy it. We feel we are providing a service that the people and the stations want. We feel it is worthwhile, and that is what gives us the fuel to keep going."

If you can't make it to the Farm Show next year, tune into your local radio station, and you may be able to get some of the flavor of the show courtesy of Penn State Radio.



Doris Thomas, Lancaster County home economist, is one of a team of 15 who give daily, up-to-the minute broadcasts from the Farm Show. She is reporting here from the main exhibition area and adds her live reports to those from the small and large arenas.



Computers make even radio broadcasting easier. Here Fred Rudy, Dauphin County agent, types show reports into the computer. The computer and printer were at ringside in the large arena.

