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Herd buyout details explained to dairymen

BY JOYCE BUPP
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YORK — Dairy farmers have the month of February in which to decide their fate for the next five years.

That's the period of bid sign-up for the herd buyout program aimed at eventually eliminating an estimated 12 billion pounds of surplus milk production.

During March, the ball will be in USDA's court, as bids are reviewed and either accepted or rejected. And by April, every dairy

farmer will be involved, contributing 40 cents per hundredweight to pay for the program.

With USDA's initial provisions on the buyout just off the presses, representatives of the Middle Atlantic Dairymen, Inc. met Wednesday evening at the York 4-H Center with area ag agency and financial personnel for a question-answer-discussion session on the program regulations.

Key points reviewed by Division Manager John Collins included a reminder that the bidding will be

on one year's production only, with payments stretched over five years, beginning the day a herd is sold.

Since the one-year base period must be the lesser of two production periods, participants in the earlier 15-month diversion program will be hit. Percentages of production signed up in the diversion cannot be included — only the actual production shipped during the lesser of the two base periods listed in the accompanying regulations.

Nor is the buyout retroactive in any way. It applies only to active producers at the time of bidding.

Every dairy animal on a farm whose bid is accepted will have to be sold, including bulls, 4-H animals and registered breeding stock.

If the composition of the herd is not reasonably consistent from Jan. 1, 1985 to Jan. 1, 1986, and to the date of bid, a dairyman must document why the herd composition has changed. For instance, a bidder suddenly changing from a herd of high-producing registered cattle to lower producing grade cattle should start lining up evidence to document the reasons for the change.

Dairymen will be signing up not just the herd, but the facility as well. For five years, the milk production facility must lay idle from producing milk. While the

facility could theoretically be used to house beef, hogs, sheep or other food-producing animals, it cannot be leased, rented, or sold for milk production use.

Acceptance of a bid for herd buyout effectively puts a sort of "deed restriction" for five years, on the farm's usage.

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Dairymen Division manager John Collins talks to ag leaders about the new herd buyout plan Wednesday in York.

USDA provides some herd buyout details

WASHINGTON — Important details of the dairy herd buy-out program of the 1985 Farm Bill were announced by Secretary of Agriculture John R. Block in order to give dairy producers additional time to begin analyzing the program.

Under the farm bill—the Food Security Act of 1985—a participating dairy producer would terminate milk production and sell for slaughter or export all dairy cattle (cows, heifers, and calves) in which the producer has an interest, the Secretary emphasized. The new act requires the Secretary to implement a milk production termination program by April 1, 1986.

"Although similar in some aspects, many provisions of the regulations being developed for this program will be quite different from the earlier milk diversion program," Secretary Block said.

The Secretary said dairy producers interested in participating in the program will submit a cwt-for-milk bid based on their base period milk marketings. If the bid is accepted, the producer will be required to stay out of dairying for five years and not use or allow the use of his facilities for milk production for the same time period.

To be eligible to bid, a producer at the time the bid is submitted must be actively engaged in the production and commercial marketing of milk.

Secretary Block stressed that any change in the composition of the dairy herd of a producer may affect eligibility for the program. He also emphasized that additional program determinations and implementing regulations will be announced at a later date.

Block explained that as background for a bid, producers will be required to submit evidence of the size and composition of their dairy herds (cows, heifers and calves) as of January 1, 1985; and January 1, 1986, and on the date that the bid is submitted.

The producer must submit monthly records of his milk marketings from July 1984 through December 1985. A producer's base period will be the lowest of the milk marketings for the 12-month period beginning July 1984 or January 1985, Secretary Block continued.

A producer may enter bids for one or more of the following time periods: April 1, 1986 - August 31, 1986; September 1, 1986 - January 28, 1987; or March 1, 1987 - August 31, 1987.

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Suspect Schuylkill broiler flock may have avian flu

BY JACK HUBLEY

STATE COLLEGE — The avian flu virus continued its offensive this week, resulting in the depopulation of 12,000 broiler-roasters in the Needmore area of Fulton County on Tuesday.

Thus far this month, the current spate of influenza has been responsible for the death or depopulation of some 83,000 broilers and turkeys in Snyder and Fulton Counties.

Still more potential bad news arrived at Penn State's diagnostic laboratory on Jan. 21, the same day that the Fulton County flock was destroyed. According to Penn State poultry disease expert Dr. David Kradel, the birds submitted were from an 11,000-bird flock of layers in Schuylkill County.

Kradel said the flock owner first noticed a "snick" (a noise characteristic of birds suffering from respiratory ailments) in the flock on Jan. 16. "We are continuing tests on that flock, and we're treating it as a suspicious flock at this time," Kradel said, emphasizing that, as of Thursday evening, the presence of H5N2 virus had not been confirmed. "Even if it is avian influenza, it could be something other than

H5N2," Kradel pointed out.

Kradel explained that the so-called AGID test currently being used to assess potential avian flu cases in Pennsylvania, is capable only of confirming the presence of some form of influenza virus or virus antibody. The samples are then submitted to USDA's National Veterinary Services Lab in Ames, Iowa, for determination of the disease's serotype, or strain.

Kradel indicated that the Schuylkill County flock could be infected with a strain of swine influenza, since swine are being raised near the poultry flock. Although this type of infection would not produce "significant disease" in poultry, it would trigger the production of flu antibodies which would then be picked up in the testing process.

The possibility of avian influenza surfacing in this flock is of special concern to flu investigators, who are unable to find a plausible explanation for its origin.

"We had a common denominator until this flock in Schuylkill County," said Dr. Earl Newpher, a Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture veterinarian at PDA's recently established avian flu field office in Shamokin Dam.

Newpher's common denominator in the cause of avian flu in both Snyder and Fulton Counties was the interstate hauling of live poultry to wholesale markets in New York City. Poor sanitation practices have been linked to infections in three broiler flocks and one turkey flock in Snyder County, as well as the flock of broiler-roasters in Fulton County. "It's just like somebody left a trail of confetti," said Newpher.

Though all infected farms are currently under quarantine, no area quarantines or restrictions on the movement of birds have been invoked at this time, according to PDA spokesman Bob Bunty.

The Department of Agriculture is calling for strict bio-security measures to protect the state's \$450 million poultry industry. Crates, vehicles and other poultry-related equipment should be cleaned and disinfected after each contact with birds, and wooden or fiber crates should be replaced with impervious materials. Inquiries concerning avian influenza may be directed to the department's Bureau of Animal Industry in Harrisburg.

Farm Show goat results



Goats are always a favorite at the farm show, no kidding. For the results of the goat show see page A22.