

Animal health board needed?

The recent flare-up of Avian Influenza in Pennsylvania has again revealed the vulnerability of livestock and poultry producers to the potentially devastating economic effects of animal and poultry diseases.

Despite ongoing research, continued improved techniques for caring and housing, new and improved vaccines, surveillance and monitoring by producers, there are still many diseases and conditions which have no preventive vaccine or cure. Depopulation or infected and exposed herds and flocks continue

to be the only positive means of disease control.

While such action almost always presents a severe financial burden on the affected producers, the resultant restrictions imposed by state or federal agencies in an effort to control the disease can have serious impact on non-affected producers as well as related industries.

The Pennsylvania Farmers' Association (PFA) policy recommends:

"The Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture (should) be funded to maintain the present levels of

animal health care; establishment of an animal health commission to coordinate the overall activities of animal health, research, diagnostic and indemnity programs for Pennsylvania agriculture; and public funding for indemnity programs."

State Representatives Samuel Morris (D-Chester County), and Carmel Sirianni (R-Susquehanna County) in November, 1985, introduced the proposed Animal Health and Diagnostic Act (HB 1935). This legislation would create an independent commission known as the animal health and

diagnostic commission. Members of the commission would include the secretaries of agriculture and health; House and Senate majority and minority ag committee chairmen; the dean of the University of Pennsylvania School of Veterinary Medicine; the dean of Pennsylvania State University's College of Agriculture; and six members representing the agriculture industry.

The commission members would elect a member chairman. It would coordinate all animal health, research and diagnostic programs. This would include all

such projects and programs being conducted by the Agriculture Department, Penn State and the University of Pennsylvania.

The commission would be permitted to receive funds from the federal and state government and private sources for agricultural research and Pennsylvania agricultural promotion.

Appropriations going for animal health, animal research and diagnostic programs would go to the commission and not to other government agencies. This provision in H.B. 1935 would help to assure animal health funds would not come under the influence of political instabilities, such as administration changes.

All farmers, regardless of their commodity, should support the passage of the animal health and diagnostic act. A strong agriculture benefits both the farmer and non-farmer.

The Farmers' View is a column that is compiled by the Public Relations Division of the Pennsylvania Farmers' Association (PFA). It expresses the views of PFA's policy positions on key issues as adopted by the organization's 23,313 family members.

PFU hits FmHA's credit stance

HARRISBURG Chester L. Reed, Executive Director of the Pennsylvania Farmers Union, testified on behalf of the family farm organization at a hearing held by Senator Arlen Specter on farm credit and concerns with the Farmers Home Administration (FmHA).

Reed explained that the federal government bears a three-part responsibility when dealing with the current farm crisis.

First, FmHA must admit that its expansion-oriented loan officers had a hand in creating the massive agricultural debt, the outstanding balance of which is over \$200 billion.

"FmHA must be as eager to work with farmers in renegotiating loans as it was to make those loans in the first place," Reed said,

pointing to the delinquency letters threatening foreclosure which FmHA had planned to send to every borrower \$100 or more in arrears as an example of how FmHA's attitude won't help family farmers stay in business. "Fortunately, FmHA has reconsidered its position and will only send threats of foreclosure to borrowers who haven't even tried to pay back their loans since the foreclosure moratorium was first announced in *Coleman v. Block*," Reed continued.

The farm leader also cited a proposed FmHA rule which would deny ownership and operating loans to farmers producing commodities which are in surplus. Reed said that such a rule would push many small family farmers over the edge into bankruptcy

without reaching the rule's stated goal of reducing surpluses.

The second area of responsibility for the government is some kind of short-term relief to get farmers the operating capital they need for this Spring. "The credit situation this year is even tighter than it was last year," Reed said.

The third area of government responsibility is the need for long-

term policy and a commitment to the family farm system of agriculture. "The patchwork bandaid approach to farm policy that we've seen in the last few farm bills has been a series of political compromises that have done nothing to improve farm income," Reed said. "This has to change."



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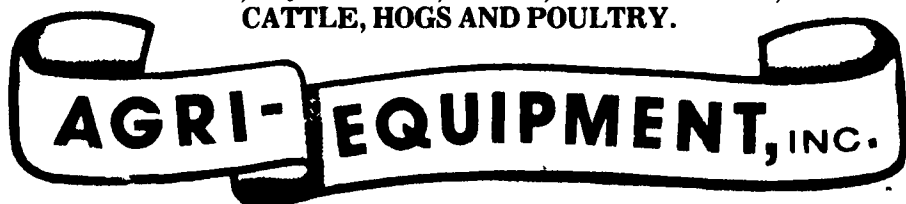
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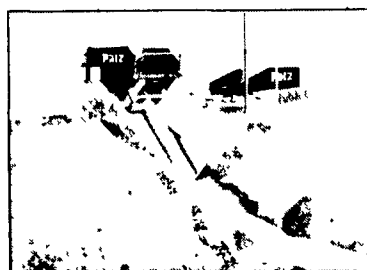
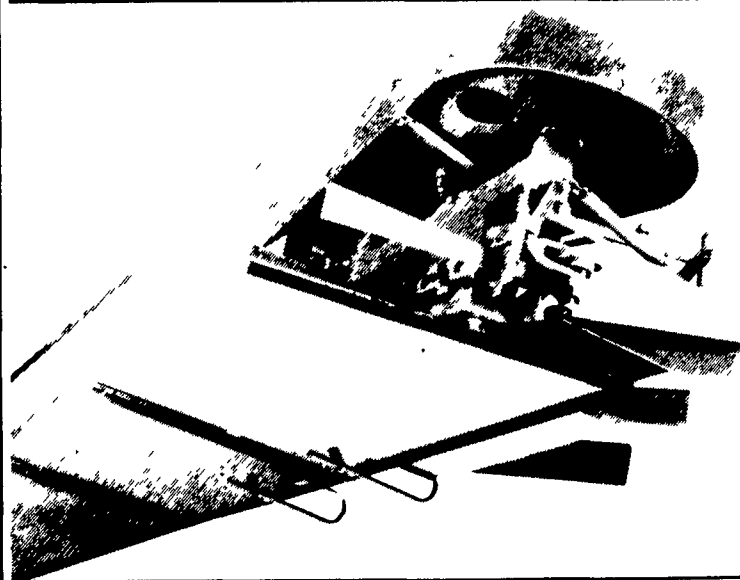
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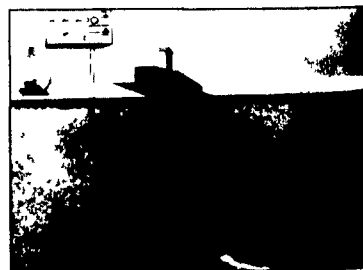
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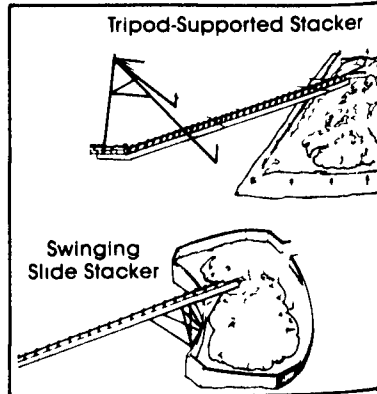
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