

Lancaster Farming

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Lebanon Co. Farmer Gives Alternate Method of Ag Preservation

A Lebanon County farmer proposed an alternative method of ag land preservation last week at the Conference on Rural Preservation in Pennsylvania at Franklin & Marshall College.

George B. Wolff speaking about the implications of agriculture on the environment said that:

I believe this method could preserve agricultural land while at the same time saving money for municipalities. In addition it would recharge our local ground water table, which I feel is probably one of the most important things we can do. One of the major problems we have confronting agriculture is the need for additional agriculture land to spread excess nutrients. All the blame for overloading of nutrients in our waterways has been placed on agriculture. I have a feeling that that's not all fair. Residential communities also contribute. Mainly as a result from leaking underground septic tanks and improperly operating septic systems. Dr. Frank Leader from U.S. Extension at a recent presentation was talking about rust-leaking underground storage tanks. He felt that a bigger problem than the leaking underground petroleum tanks were the leaking underground tanks commonly known as septic tanks. He said that right after World War II thousands of round metal tanks were buried with a life expectancy of 25 years. Here we are 45 years later, and they are still being used. Where municipalities have concentrated septic systems

they are having more and more problems contributing to more and more high nitrate levels in the ground water. This creates the situation that will eventually force

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Dairy Month coverage to begin next week

LANCASTER — Lancaster Farming will honor the dairy industry with its annual Dairy Month coverage which begins in next week's edition.

This newspaper's editorial staff has devoted extensive amounts of time and effort in preparing this review, which will continue throughout the June editions.

Coverage will include stories from correspondents throughout Lancaster Farming Territory. These stories will range from top dairymen to crop management associations to a barn white washer.

Watch for next week's edition for the beginning of our in-depth account of the dairy industry.



A large crowd attended the Conference on Rural Preservation in Pennsylvania at Franklin and Marshall College last Saturday.

Solids Not Fat Discussed

BY KATHY E. GILL

Special to Lancaster Farming
FT. LAUDERDALE — Dairy farmer options on multiple component pricing can often be predicted by the color of their herds. But industry opinions on the same subject are far less uniform and demonstrate that the subject is far more complex than apparent at first glance.

In a session on nonfat solids standards and testing at the second annual US Dairy Forum, former Maryland and Virginia General Manager Jim Click opened the session with the comment "we've been down this road before."

He was referring to past symposia and other producer discussions debating the merits of producer pay prices based upon milk component other than butterfat. And, as he pointed out, past discussions have not made overwhelming inroads into the issue.

Dr. David Barbano of Cornell related results of a milk composition study which only adds to the complexity of the issue. The study, which analyzed milk samples from 50 plants in 19 states across the country, demonstrated that there is tremendous variety in total solids, percent of fat, percent of protein and percent of all solids-not-fat.

In his presentation, Dr. Barbano assured the technical people in the audience that all testing was done in one centralized laboratory. The fact that he prefaced his survey results with such an announcement was a clue to one factor holding up pricing on nonfat solids.

Major regional differences in milk composition affect attempts to standardize samples. For example, the annual average for nonfat solids is 8.7 percent. In the West, that figure rises to 8.8 percent and in the Mid-Atlantic it drops to 8.65 percent. The range on any given farm, however, can be as great as 6.6 percent to 10.0 percent.

Moreover, the Mid-Atlantic has one of the lowest protein levels in any region of the country - 3.22 percent compared to the West's 3.33 percent. Even the Deep South falls in at 3.26 percent.

A more debilitating problem, however, lies in the test itself. Or the tests themselves.

Put simply, there are too many tests available.

For each component, including butter, there is more than one way a laboratory can ascertain its percentage of milk volume. But the tests do not necessarily provide the same percentages, even for the same milk sample. Thus the stumbling block.

If farmer Jones is paid for nonfat solids using test A, and farmer Smith is paid using test B, it is likely that their milk checks will not accurately reflect the variations in the milk composition.

California-based Randall Young, of Dairy and Food Labs in San Francisco, told the group that in the market, the state sets prices and determines which testing methods will be used to pay those prices. Moreover, by motion of 50 percent of the producers shipping to any one plant, the producers may force the plant to use a third party test for payment.

But can such a mandated uniformity be reached across the US?

Not if opinions expressed at this Forum accurately reflect the industry.

In addition to grappling over the technical issues of determining just what is in each milk sample, the Forum also touched on the issues of increasing nonfat solids percentages in fluid milk.

Such a move was heartily opposed by most fluid processors. However, Gary Korsmeier of California Milk Producers Association attributed California's higher standards to increased milk consumption.

"Consumers are willing to pay

for a better-tasting, more nutritious product," he asserted. "Few of us would have guessed a few years ago that consumers are after taste and not necessarily just price. The growth of the gourmet ice cream market is a good example."

However, processors remain staunchly opposed to nationwide increases in the standards for nonfat solids in fluid milk. Nevertheless, the agree in principle to paying on protein or all solids for milk used in cheese, ice cream or powder.



Tobacco Planting Progresses

Tobacco planting is progressing nicely in Lancaster County. The nice rains last week prepared the soil and the warm weather grew the plants rapidly. Don and Dawn Rohrer on the planter and Mrs. Rohrer guiding the tractor along the contours on the family farm off Limevalley Road had already planted two acres by late Thursday afternoon when Everett Newswanger, Managing Editor caught up with the planting operation. The Rohrer family expect to be about half done planting by the end of today.