

# 'Farm Spokespersons' take ag story to consumers

INDIANAPOLIS, In. — The farm economy, use of agrichemicals in food production and the future of the family farm are leading agricultural concerns of urban consumers, according to three national farm spokespersons.

The three Elanco Young Farmer Spokespersons for Agriculture — Floyd Beard, Rick Fruth and Patricia Mueller — addressed these and other consumer concerns about agriculture in a recent three-city tour.

The spokespersons met with media and consumers in Denver, Colorado; Portland, Oregon; and Los Angeles, California.

Although many farmers are facing financial difficulties, these farm spokespersons chose to emphasize the positive aspects of agriculture. They pointed out the importance of agriculture to all

consumers by showing how the ag economy affects all consumers.

They pointed out that food in the United States is less expensive than anywhere in the world; that agriculture and related industries employ the largest number of people in the U.S. and help support the economy; and that our food quality and quantity are the best in the world. The spokespersons also answered questions and cleared up misconceptions about farming and the ag industry.

During the week-long media tour, the spokespersons brought these messages to an estimated audience of nearly six million. From January 27 to January 31, they conducted 22 media interviews, including six television, ten radio, two newspaper and two magazine.

In addition to the media in-

terviews, the spokespersons communicated directly with urban consumers through informal visits to grocery stores in each city. There the spokespersons answered questions about farming, food prices, food safety and agrichemicals, plus other consumer concerns.

"Most of the consumers we met were pleased with food quality and thought that food prices were fair. Many however, did not understand why farmers are in a financial bind even though food prices have remained steady or risen," notes spokesperson Patricia Mueller.

"Generally, we found consumers very supportive of farmers," she adds. "Many asked what they could do to help with the current farm situation. We told them that awareness was very important and they should read up on agriculture

issues and let their representatives in Congress know how they feel."

Spokesperson Rick Fruth also found a great deal of concern for farmers among urbanites.

"I think some of the media have overplayed certain aspects of the farm 'crisis'. I wanted them to know that it is not a hopeless situation, that the majority of farmers are in stable or good financial condition," he explains. While acknowledging the problems, Fruth tried to concentrate on the positive aspects about agriculture today.

As a beef producer, spokesperson Floyd Beard answered many consumer questions and concerns about beef quality and the use of antibiotics in beef production. "I tried to emphasize the stringent testing and

regulations that beef must pass before it goes on the supermarket shelf.

"Beef producers have also been responsive to consumer demands for leaner beef. New USDA figures show that the cholesterol levels of

lean red meat, pork and poultry are very comparable," Beard points out.

"Also, the American Heart Association, the National Cancer Institute and the National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute all agree that red meat fits into their diet recommendations. Both the media and consumers we talked to were interested in this new information," Beard says.

The three spokespersons were selected in a contest last December at the National Young Farmers Educational Institute. The contest and media tour are sponsored by Elanco Products Company, Division of Eli Lilly and Company, Indianapolis, Indiana, in cooperation with the National Young Farmers Association.

This year marks the eleventh year of the program that encourages open dialog between farmers and urban consumers. Approximately 88 million consumers have now heard agriculture's story through the efforts of these spokespersons.

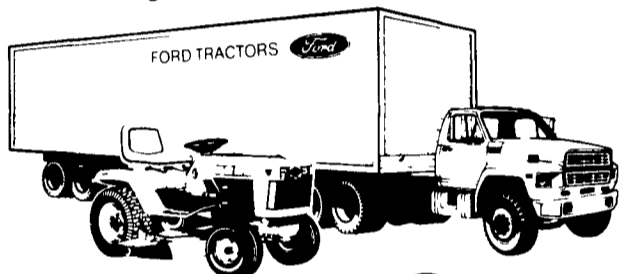
According to Linda Fogle, coordinator of the program for Elanco, the program has been very successful in meeting its goal of opening communication lines between farmers and urban consumers.

"We're happy to have the opportunity to help young farmers raise awareness and understanding of ag related issues among urban consumers. There are so many concerns nationally about agriculture today and we feel the best people to address those concerns are the farmers themselves," Fogle concludes.

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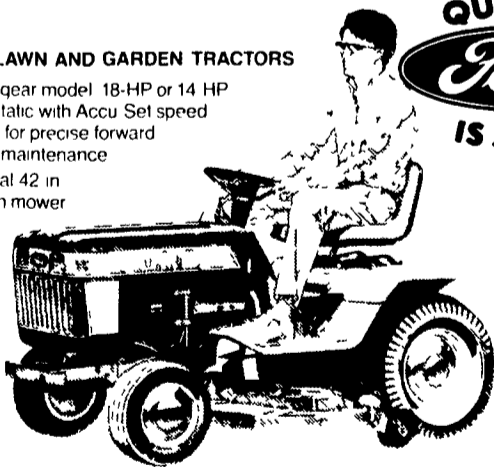
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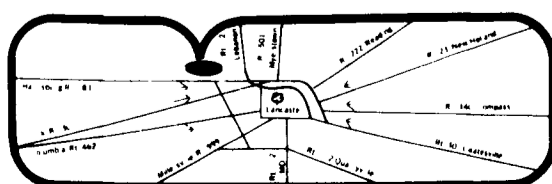
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