

CMA Technicians Nip Crop Problems In the Bud

BY MARY MAXWELL
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"We started the first association because on many of the dairy farms around here things were not being done or being overly done," reminisces Murry McJunkin, Centre County farmer and organizer of Pennsylvania's first crop management association. "We decided to pay someone to do things we didn't have the time to do. Someone to monitor the crops, tell us what spraying was necessary so we wouldn't be spending money for materials we didn't need," McJunkin continued.

The crop management idea spread from that original Centre County association started seven years ago to a network of 14 associations in Pennsylvania involving 400 farmers and 75,000 acres.

A Better Bottom Line

The basic idea behind a crop management association is helping members farm more profitably. "Crop management practices used to be like buying insurance," said McJunkin. "You didn't know what you had so you'd spray for everything. We used stuff we didn't need rather than taking a chance. That cost us money."

For members of crop management associations that has changed. Now technicians hired by local associations regularly visit members' fields to observe the condition of the crop, check pest, disease and weed problems. Technicians then report their findings to the farmer and suggest corrective measures.

In addition, association members receive help with crop record keeping systems, crop production planning, soil, manure and tissue sampling. Associations also provide yield checks for corn

grain. Some crop management associations offer yield checks for corn silage, alfalfa and soybeans, as well. While all CMAs do plant population checks for corn, others do them for alfalfa, small grains and soybeans. Some check grain moisture at harvest and others monitor moisture levels of stored grain. Several associations assist members with sprayer and corn planter calibrations. Many offer computerized crop record summaries. Each local association decides what services to provide for its members and each member may select from the services offered.

CMAs Popular With Dairymen

On a recent visit to the dairy farm of Master Farmer Joseph Hartle, technician Greg Connor checked the corn population and weeds and insects in the corn fields. He also checked Hartle's new seedings of alfalfa for weeds.

Then on another Centre County farm, Connor measured the member's fields to see if he was staying within his ASCS quota. He looked over a new seeding of alfalfa and checked the weed control in oats. In addition, Connor took soil samples on three newly-rented fields that had not been included in the member's annual fall soil testing program.

These services are particularly helpful to dairy farmers. Often, while tending to dairy herd management, they have had too little time to develop good crop management practices. This may explain why dairy farmers comprise almost 75 percent of CMA membership.

Each local CMA is owned and controlled by its members. Membership fees are also set by individual associations and are

based on the number of crop acres the member wants to include in the program. According to Melvin Brown, coordinator of the Crop Management Program, the per-acre cost of membership (about a bushel and a half of corn or a couple of bales of hay) is a sound investment. There are payoffs in reduced risk of chemical contamination, improved soil conservation, and of course, greater profits.

Working With Extension

Local associations maintain a close relationship with county extension offices providing advantages to both groups. Extension staff help CMA directors and technicians with organizational and technical information. CMA technicians provide county extension offices with day-to-day assessments of field conditions.

"This relationship is even stronger now," says Brown. "We started a new program in May. CMA technicians throughout the state are able to use the Penn Mail computer network through local extension offices." Brown gets reports from technicians in his office on the Penn State campus on Wednesday mornings. If there are insect or disease problems, he may seek advice from Dr. Dennis Calvin, extension entomologist, or



Crop Management Program coordinator Melvin Brown reviews reports from CMA technicians throughout the state. He then issues a summary, as well as recommendations to technicians.

a plant pathologist. On Thursday the CMA technicians receive from Brown a summary of what has been observed in other areas of the state, plus recommendations for insect and disease control.

All local crop management

associations have joined to form the Pennsylvania Crop Management Association which promotes the crop management concept in Pennsylvania.

For more information on CMA's, farmers should contact their local Cooperative Extension Service.

Extension Volunteers Help Community

WASHINGTON — What makes volunteers volunteer?

Researchers with the University of Wisconsin last year surveyed Cooperative Extension Service volunteers to find out. They learned Extension's nearly 3 million volunteers do what they do for a number of reasons — from helping themselves to helping Extension, the community and the people in it.

The volunteers' roles are just as varied as their reasons. They teach, counsel, organize, answer phones and raise funds. They work with more than 48 million people, including new parents, home gardeners, executives, senior citizens and many others.

One volunteer profiled here works with farm lenders and borrowers; the other, with low-income youth. Though their work is very different, they share one common purpose: giving something back to the community.

Helping Lenders and Borrowers

Work It Out

When the local bar association put out a call for volunteers to work with the state's farm mediation program, recent law school graduate Bob Peterson immediately signed up.

"I saw an opportunity to return something positive to the farming community where I was born and raised," says Peterson, who now lives in a Minneapolis-St. Paul suburb. "My farming background, law degree and real estate brokerage experiences seemed the right combination for the program."

Launched this year, the mediation program helps lenders and borrowers embroiled in farm real estate conflicts make decisions about restructuring debts. The program is a cooperative effort of the Minnesota Department of Agriculture and Commerce, state Minnesota banking associations, Farm Credit Services, farm organizations and the Minnesota Extension Service. Extension has trained 300 volunteer mediators for the program since January.

"It's a frustrating, but rewarding process," says Peterson. "The farmers want to stay in business and the banks have a vested interest in keeping the farmers in business. But both sides must work out their anger,

mistrust and lack of communication before getting to the task of restructuring debt and looking at options."

Peterson's role, and that of the other Extension volunteer mediators, is to work with the farmer and banker as a third, disinterested party. "I can interject new thoughts or ideas," he says, "but mediation only works when the parties are motivated to reach a solution."

Peterson believes the Extension agent is the one party in the farm crisis the farmer really trusts: "Farmers believe Extension personnel will keep their confidences, give objective feedback and point them in the right direction for help."

The volunteer mediation training is one facet of Project Support, the Minnesota Extension Service program for farm families needing financial and stress management assistance.

Bringing New Experiences To Low-Income Youth

Jeff Kellogg, a 25-year-old student at Humboldt State University, Arcata, Calif., knows classrooms aren't the only places to learn. He volunteers for an education program that shows local youth the great outdoors.

The program, 4-H LEAP (Leadership Education Adventure Program), brings leadership training and outdoor experiences to youth whose families live at or below the poverty level. The Extension Service cosponsors the program, which is the only one of its kind in the area.

"Teaching the kids new skills, both technical and interpersonal, and watching them apply what they learn is my favorite part of volunteering," says Kellogg, who coordinates the work of 40 other LEAP volunteers.

Kellogg says his commitment stems from his interest in outdoor education and his desire to help low-income youth in the community. He has contributed some 1,000 hours — or 15 hours a week — to the 4-H program.

And it seems to be paying off. Kellogg says the youth enjoy the new experiences and display signs of increased self-esteem and sensitivity.

Hundreds of college students and thousands of youth have participated in Youth Educational Services, the experiential learning program at Humboldt State that includes 4-H LEAP and other youth projects.

Seeing Eye Club to Meet

MOORISTOWN, N.J. — The Seeing Eye Inc. of Mooristown, N.J. and 4-H clubs have had a working relationship for more than 40 years to provide dogs as guides for blind people. Seeing Eye provides the dogs, instructors and training that furnishes the dog guides; the 4-H members and their families provide a loving home for the puppies during the first year of their lives.

The Seeing Eye puppy clubs are open to anyone ages 9 to 19, but the whole family becomes an important part of the project. 4-H members and their puppies are required to attend monthly meetings of these clubs. These meetings involve club business and obedience lessons.

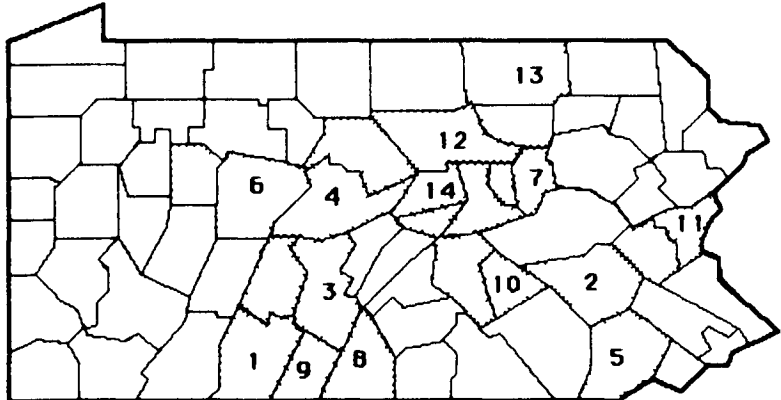
The puppies are 8 weeks old when received by the 4-H'ers. They do not require any special training other than house breaking, being taught good manners and basic obedience commands. When the puppies are 12 to 14 months old

they return to the Seeing Eye for their formal training. This training lasts for three months and during the 11th week the family that raised the puppy is then invited to Mooristown to see the dog working with his instructor.

The Seeing Eye provides the 4-H'er not only with a puppy but also a collar, leash, brush, project book, and bag of puppy food. The Seeing Eye covers all veterinary costs and provides an amount every three months to help defray the cost of feed.

In northern Chester County meetings are held monthly at St. Andrew's Church and are coordinated by Joyce Colket. A new club is forming in southern Chester County under the leadership of Margaret Johnson, and will meet at the New Garden Elementary School. The first meeting will be held on June 19 at 7:30 p.m.

For more information contact the Chester County 4-H office at 896-3500.



Shaded areas indicate counties served by associations. Numbers indicate counties where CMAs are headquartered.

1. Bedford Crop Improvement Assoc.
2. Berks Crop Management Assoc.
3. Blair-Huntingdon Crop Mgmt.
4. Centre Crop Imp.
5. Chester Crop Mgmt.
6. Clear-Jeff Crop Mgmt.
7. Columbia Crop Mgmt.
8. Franklin Crop Imp.
9. Fulton Crop Mgmt.
10. Lebanon-Lower Dauphin Crop Mgmt.
11. Lehigh Valley Crop Mgmt.
12. Lycoming Crop Mgmt.
13. Sulbra Crop Mgmt.
14. Union-Snyder Crop Mgmt.



CMA technician Greg Connor (left) inspects a field map with Centre County farmer Joseph Hartle. During the week, Connor checked Hartle's corn population, and monitored corn and alfalfa fields for weeds and insects.