

Extension Tour Showcases Multi-County System At Work

BY CRAIG BINGAMAN
Snyder Co. Correspondent

BEAVER SPRINGS — The multi-county Extension Service in the counties of Snyder, Union, Northumberland, and Montour is a one-of-a-kind operation in the state. To show other Extension personnel and interested parties the efficiency of such an operation, the four-county service presented a tour and an educational program on July 16 in Lewisburg. Dan Spangler, chairman of the tour, said the program was to show how the unique system works in this area.

Three different areas were on the agenda for the tour; McEwensville sewage treatment facility, Mertz Greenhouse, and Wehr Dairy Farm. All three operations were examples of how

the multi-county system provides better service though specialized assistance.

On a pilot basis, the multi-county program was initiated in 1987. The system works by placing in each of the four counties a Cooperative Extension Service office with county agents representing their specialty. These agents serve the public in dairy, clothing, taxes and other areas.

Calling himself an "old timer" in the multi-county system, Richard Little, dairy agent in Montour County, praises the program. "We have a chance to be innovative," he said. "We can also divide up the areas of specialties." Russ Hummel of Snyder County, one of the founders of the program, also agreed that the system is efficient and economically feasible.

The first stop on the tour, the McEwensville sewage treatment facility, demonstrated the use of aerobic activity to dissolve waste solids. Guy Temple, the community resource development agent in Union County, stressed the advantage of a lagoon system whereby raw sewage is processed in 2½ weeks by transfer through four modules, then into a chlorinator. The facility presently handles 260 people and was initiated by the Extension Service.

Mertz Greenhouse in Northumberland County was the next stop on the agenda. The Northumberland business raises mostly tomatoes with an additional 2,000 hanging baskets. Ninety percent of the tomatoes are grown in troughs or raised beds.

Jeff Mizer, horticultural agent in Snyder County, said that owner, master farmer Boyd Mertz, uses a double poly sheeting over the roof instead of just glass. This provides an insulator and creates better heat retention. The seven greenhouses used for the tomatoes are able to produce two crops a year with their 28,000 square feet in trough culture.

The final stop on the tour was the Wehr Dairy Farm near Mifflinburg. Allen Wehr said that his farm is a two-century farm, being that it has been in the family since 1774. He also stated that his father was one of the pioneers in artificial insemination use in the state.

The 195-acre farm in Union County raises 150 acres of corn and alfalfa for their 75-cow herd.



Touring the Wehr dairy barn were (left) Richard Little, Montour County agent; Dr. Lamartine Hood, Dean of Penn State's College of Ag; Dan Spangler, tour chairman; Guy Temple, Union County agent; and Don Evans, assistant director of Extension.

Averaging 19,000 pounds of milk, the Wehrs utilize DHIA services and assistance from Extension programs.

Another program utilized by Wehr is the Crop Management Association. Originally started in Centre County in 1978 by Mel Brown, the association now boasts 14 such programs statewide. Bill Donnemeyer, representing Snyder and Union Counties, says his duties as technician entail soil and tissue testing as well as insect and disease control on 4,500 acres for

farmers belonging to the association. This enables farmers to gain greater efficiency in their operations.

The summer tour was concluded with a program on the community living and 4-H programs. It was evident from the size of the group, which included Dr. Wayne Hinrich, Penn State Dean of Extension, and Dr. Lambert Hood, Dean of the College of Agriculture, that this type of multi-county system may well be considered for other areas of the state.

Eckel Reports No Dairy Quotas In Sight

GETTYSBURG — A Pennsylvania farm leader has received assurances that there will be no dairy quota system established in the U.S.

Keith Eckel, president of the Pennsylvania Farmers' Association (PFA), reported the news to a meeting today of the organization's Board of Directors. Eckel said that during a recent meeting of farm leaders in Washington D.C., USDA Secretary Richard Lyng personally assured the group that no dairy quota system would be put into effect as long as he is in office.

Eckel said Lyng offered his remarks to discourage any dairyman who might be pushing up his herd's production in hopes of getting a higher base in the event of a quota system.

"Boosting production on the chance of a quota system is counterproductive to the aims of the Dairy Termination Program, nationwide dairy promotion campaigns and other efforts to rid the dairy industry of costly

oversupplies," Eckel told the board.

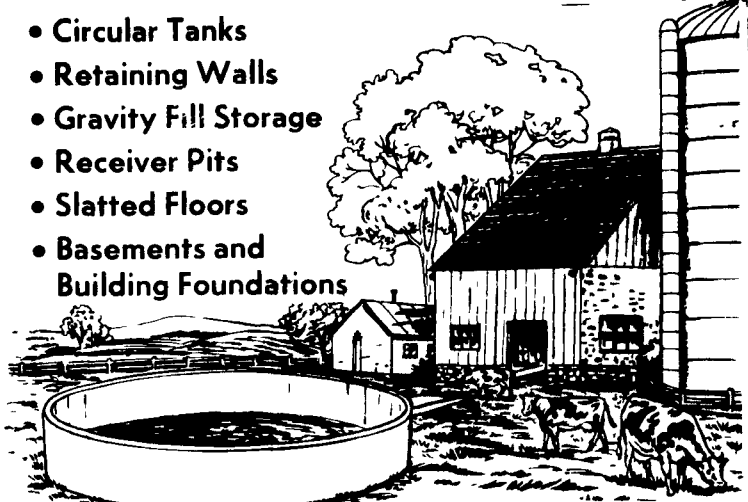
Noting that discussions of dairy issues are expected at PFA's annual meeting in November, Eckel reminded the state board directors that PFA's present policy recommends, "That we oppose milk production quotas or controls of the nature of Class I Base Plan proposals." Eckel said, "Our members have expressed through their voting delegates their belief that dairy supply and demand can best be balanced through a market oriented program."

He added, "Controlling the amount of surplus government dairy purchases by adjusting the support price is the most effective and efficient way to provide stability for our dairy industry."

PFA is a voluntary, general farm organization representing over 23,300 farm families. It is a part of the nation's largest farm organization, the 3.3-million member American Farm Bureau Federation.

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