

## Grant Awarded To Study Grain Sorghum

Two University of Delaware extension specialists and a marketing specialist with the Delaware Agricultural Experiment Station have received a \$9000 grant from the Delaware Department of Agriculture to study grain sorghum production and market development opportunities in the state.

The marketing part of the two-pronged project will be conducted by Carl L. German, extension crops marketing specialist, and Ulrich C. Toensmeyer, professor of agricultural marketing. With the aid of this grant, the hope to:

- determine the per acre cost of growing grain sorghum.
- determine the economic

feasibility of substituting sorghum for corn in poultry and livestock rations.

• analyze the impact on the state's agricultural economy of growing more sorghum and less corn and soybeans.

Extension soil fertility and crop production specialist Dr. Richard

W. Taylor will evaluate commercially available grain sorghum varieties for agronomic and chemical traits and the production practices necessary for market development and crop acceptance on Delmarva. He will also publish a list of characteristics of grain sorghum varieties tested to help farmers assess their market appeal.

Sorghum, also known as milo, can be substituted for corn in poultry, swine or beef cattle rations, but some varieties are more palatable than others, depending on their tannin content.

The purpose of the one-year project is to determine the feasibility of growing sorghum in rotation with soybeans on nonirrigated sandy soils in Sussex and lower Kent Counties.

Many dryland farmers now grow

continuous soybeans on these droughty soils because corn yields are so uncertain. The practice has led to a drastic decline in yields in recent years, due to the buildup of diseases and soybean cyst nematode infestations. Planting sorghum, which tolerates drought better than corn, could be on way to break out of this unprofitable monoculture.

However, before sorghum can be considered a viable alternative crop for Delaware, farmers must have an assured market. Broiler industry demand for milo on Delmarva will depend on the price of this grain compared to the price of corn. Demand will also be affected by the amount and consistency of supply. A cost-effective production system tailored to Delmarva growing conditions must also be developed.

## Veterinary Assn. Issues Recommendations

In the aftermath of the assault and vandalizing of a layer operation in Delaware last month by animal welfare activists, the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) has published its official position on layer husbandry.

AVMA's position is that the current use of cages to house layer chickens will continue. Present knowledge is not sufficient to support a radical change or ban of this system. Cages now house approximately 95% of the 250 million laying birds in the United States. The productivity and health of these birds has improved in many respects, indicating that confinement housing in cages can enhance the welfare of birds when coupled with proper management.

Research to develop and evaluate model test systems to more fully understand the physical, behavioral and medical

well-being of laying birds in confinement systems is encouraged by AVMA.

AVMA recommends that unwanted chicks, poults, and pipped eggs be killed by an acceptable humane method, such as carbon dioxide euthanasia. Smothering unwanted chicks or poults in bags or containers is not acceptable. Pips, unwanted chicks, or poults must be killed prior to disposal.

AVMA recognizes that, when necessary, beak trimming to remove the sharp tip should be performed in a rapid manner on young chickens and turkeys to prevent or reduce the natural habits of cannibalism, fighting, and feather picking. The procedure should be done only by properly trained personnel, and alternative methods for the control of cannibalism should be sought.

It is AVMA's position that in-

duced moulting of layer birds, which is designed to bring the entire flock into a resting period at the same time, is an acceptable management practice, when done under careful supervision, using reduced light and low sodium/calcium diets. The starvation/water deprivation method of induced moulting is not acceptable.

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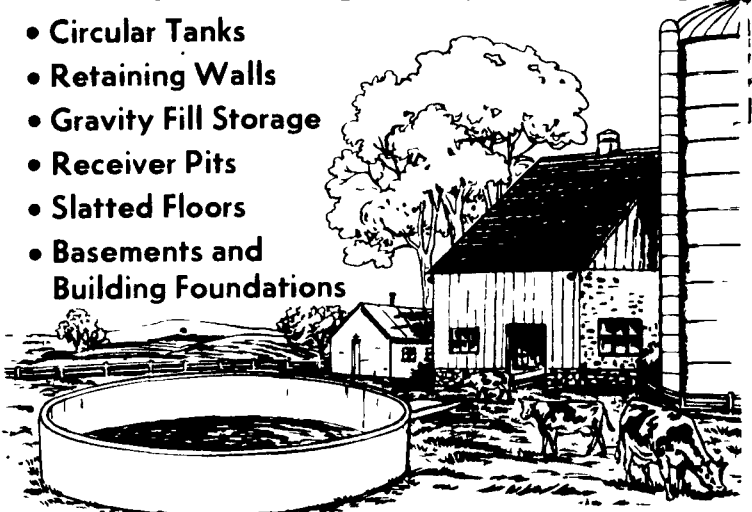
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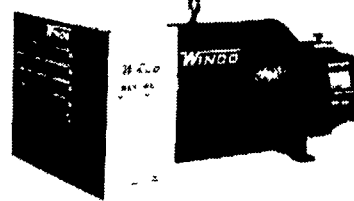
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