

HARRISBURG — Michael Sheldon has been appointed recently to the position of Director of Communications with the Pennsylvania Poultry Federation. A Harrisburg native, Michael's extensive media experience includes audio and video production, script writing, newspaper reporting, still photography and commercial radio broadcasting.

He holds a B.S. degree from the Pennsylvania State University and is currently working toward a Masters in Journalism and Public Relations.



Michael Sheldon



POULTRY FEDERATION

Francis To Address NY Convention

ITHACA, NY — John Francis, vice president of marketing for the Beef Industry Council of the National Livestock and Meat Board, will speak on the Beef Checkoff Jan. 10 at the annual convention of the New York Beef Cattlemen's Association at the Sheraton Inn, Ithaca.

Francis manages the development, implementation, and evaluation of the national beef marketing programs conducted by the Beef Industry Council. He assists and counsels Jay Wardell, senior vice president of the beef program, in all areas of beef program management. He also coordinates programs between the Beef Industry Council and the 38 state beef councils including the

New York Beef Industry Council and acts as liaison between the Beef Industry Council and the Beef Promotion and research Board.

The two-day New York Beef Cattlemen's Association convention begins Jan. 9 with seminars conducted by Cornell University staff on forage and grazing management and on marketing feeder and finished cattle. Burton Eller, National Cattlemen's Association vice president for government affairs and policy coordination will be the Friday night banquet speaker.

Information about the Convention may be obtained from Lee Kraszewski, RD 1, Box 120, Corning, N.Y. 14830.

Stay Current To Stay Afloat

BY RICHARD BARCZEWSKI
University of Delaware

NEWARK, Del. — There have been some major changes in the attitudes of the farm community since I first became involved with Cooperative Extension as a 4-H club member 14 years ago.

It used to be that any time a meeting was held on any topic ranging from marketing hogs to growing corn, a full house of growers was in attendance. Producers seemed more interested in keeping up-to-date and more willing to try new techniques. Today, however, producer attendance at meetings has dropped off drastically. Why?

Farming has been a boom or bust endeavor over the past 15 years. When things were going well, they were going really well. And when things were bad, they were really bad. Of course, we all know what the situation is now.

Hog producers currently are seeing some decent prices, thanks to reduced inventories and a stable demand. However, corn prices are down. As a matter of fact, they even dropped below \$1 per bushel in the Midwest recently.

The real kicker is that most hog producers also grow crops. I personally know very few hog men who don't produce grain in addition to their hog operations.

In a year like this, the money you lose on your corn crop can't always be made up by the hogs. Cheap grain is only cheap when you're buying, not producing it. But having a diversified operation can sometimes result in a little profit

or at least reduced loss, compared to a single commodity production system.

This year, for example, if it costs you 40 cents to produce a pound of live hog and the market price is 55 cents, you stand to net \$34.50 on a 230 pound market hog. Now suppose you're marketing 2,000 hogs per year. Assuming prices were stable over that entire year (and we all know how unlikely that is), the net income from your hog operation would be \$69,000.

That's a nice piece of change, especially considering prices in previous years and the bills you may have accumulated due to low hog prices in the past.

Remember what I said earlier? Most pork producers also grow grain. Let's just suppose that besides the hogs above, you also grow 300 acres of corn. Where would you stand now, financially?

In the parts of Delmarva where most of the hogs are raised, nonirrigated corn yields ranged from 0 to 50 bushels this year. If your average over the 300 acres was 30 bushels, that land produced 9,000 bushels of corn. Corn prices on the peninsula are currently running at \$1.65 per bushel, so the gross income from that 9,000 bushels would be \$14,850.

Now here comes another kicker. According to some cost of production figures I have in my files, it costs about \$265 (including rent) to grow one acre of corn in this part of the country. Multiply this by 300 acres and it cost approximately \$79,500 to grow that corn. Considering that you were

only able to sell it for \$14,850, you suffered a net loss of \$64,650 on the corn.

In the situation I've just described, your net income for the total farm (hogs and corn) would be only \$4,350 for the year. Things would have looked better in this specific example, if you'd produced more hogs or less corn. In another year the opposite might be true, depending on production costs and the market prices of corn and hogs.

Under the circumstances, it's easy to see why many farmers are apathetic about agricultural meetings. Times have been bad, and things don't look good for the next several years, either. But the key to surviving the current slump is to improve management and stay informed.

Farming is a business. And just as in any other business, you, the proprietor, must be aware of your production costs, average production and average income.

Keeping up-to-date with current management practices is also a must in any competitive business. I can't think of anything more dangerous to a farmer in financial difficulty than avoiding current information.

The hog industry is a volatile industry. Prices fluctuate, and new technologies lead to better feeding, housing and health practices. As a producer you must keep current if you intend to stay in business.

Keeping current won't guarantee you a place in the future of the hog industry, but it will reduce the likelihood of business failure.



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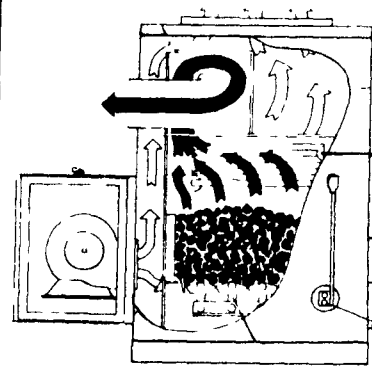
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