Penn State Ag Advisory Council Elects New Officers

Penn State Agricultural Advisory Council elected Alfred S. Dugan of Hershey as president at its fall meeting. Dugan represents the Seedsmen's Pennsylvania Association on the Council.

Also elected officers are Richard E. Denison of Shiremanstown, representing the Pennsylvania Farmer's Association, vice president, and Robert Leslie, of the Pennsylvania Forest Resources Task Force, secretary-treasurer.

The Council was formed in 1961 to represent the agricultural interests within Pennsylvania and serve as an official advisory board to Penn State's College of Agriculture.

The Council meets twice yearly with administrators, faculty and staff of the College of Agriculture to discuss programs, progress in research, educational services, and significant developments in the College.

Council activities have included an extensive review of the academic prograr's and priorities in the College completed two years ago. The results of that study are included in a report containing more than 200 recommendations for action in animal science, plant science and undergraduate education.

The Council also has sponsored symposia for educators and county commissioners to help them more fully understand agricultural concerns in Pennsylvania. In addition, the Council has helped coordinate tours of agriculture regions of the state for university administrators.

More recently, the Council cosponsored the Future of Pennsylvania Agriculture Conference held in Harrisburg last spring.

More than 400 agricultural and political leaders and educators from around the state attended the two-day conference, which was

moderated by Penn State President Bryce Jordan.

Outgoing president of the Association.

Council was Galen E. Dreibelbis of State College, representing the Pennsylvania Cattlemen's

Spiders: Nature's Pest Control Agents

NEWARK, Del. – People often regard the spider as a sinister presence that lurks in dark, cobwebby corners waiting to jump out and bite. This prejudice, often fostered by childhood fears, is understandable, but it doesn't do the spider justice.

This much-maligned animal is actually one of nature's best pest control agents, since its whole life is spent capturing and gobbling up insects. Because of the spider's fondness for houseflies, small beetles, mosquitoes, thousandleggers, cockroaches and other troublesome insects, it's definitely on the beneficial list, says University of Delaware extension entomologist Mark Graustein. And for the most part, it's quite safe to have around.

About 1,000 species of spiders live in the U.S. With a few wellknown exceptions - such as the black widow, the tarantula and the brown recluse - most are harmless to humans. In fact, says Graustein, the spider is very timid and prefers to avoid all contact with people.

Spiders are such a familiar presence that they're usually taken for granted -- unless

someone has a special phobia against them. But most people know very little about them.

According to Graustein, spiders belong to a class of animals called arachnids. They are closely related to ticks, mites and daddy longlegs - all of which have eight legs and two body sections. Insects, on the other hand, have six legs and three body sections.

Spiders have developed all sorts of specialized mechanisms for catching insects, the entomologist says. Some swing from a long strand of silk onto their prey as it flies by. Jumping spiders can pounce on a bug from several inches away. Fishing spiders walk on water and even dive below its surface in pursuit of the aquatic insects and small fish on which they feed. Crab spiders are so well camouflaged by their coloring that they can just sit inside a flower blossom and wait for unsuspecting insects to enter. Some crab spiders even have the ability to change color to blend in better with their plant surroundings.

Silk Stronger Than Steel

All spiders have spinerettes, silk that case, the spider's probably

species make webs. The silk for the webs is secreted as a liquid which hardens when exposed to air. For its size, spider silk is stronger than steel – in fact, during World War II the silk from some spiders was used for making the cross hairs in gunsights. Spiders use their silk not only to trap insects, but also to line their nests and construct egg sacs. Some tropical species use it to make parachutes on which they manage to travel great distances.

When it comes to webs, the orb weavers are the great builders among spiders, Graustein says. These boldly marked black and yellow arachnids grow to more than an inch in diameter and usually can be found hanging upside down in the middle of their outdoor webs. These webs are easiest to see on foggy mornings after their silken strands have been beaded with dew.

"It's unlikely that you'll ever get bitten by a spider," says Graustein, "unless you're working in a heavily infested area such as a deserted building, an old well or an abandoned pile of lumber. And in

spinning organs. But not all biting to protect itself." With a little extra care, he says the problem can usually be avoided.

Though beneficial, indoors spiders can sometimes become a nuisance, festooning light fixtures or ceiling corners with their webbs in otherwise tidy rooms.

Sanitation is the most practical way to deal with such problems, the entomologist says. He suggests using a vacuum cleaner, as housecleaning with a cloth, dust mop or broom is unlikely to remove the spiders responsible for webs. Take care to remove any small egg sacs, too. Dispose of the vacuum cleaner bag or its contents immediately after cleaning otherwise the captured spiders may escape to weave more webs.

Where vacuuming is impractical or difficult, a chemical spray can be used instead. Graustein says many of the insecticide brands available to homeowners will control spiders.

For quick knock-down, check product labels for materials containing the active ingredients dichlorvos, resmethrin, synergized pyrethrins or tetramethrin.

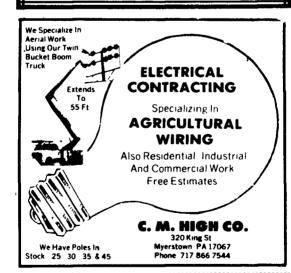
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