

Penn State Offers Agricultural Information

Owners of home computers with modems can now electronically get current information for use right on the farm from the Extension Service. PENpages, a computer-based library that the public can access free of charge provides up-to-date information on a variety of agricultural subjects. PENpages includes daily, weekly and monthly reports on dairy, livestock, water quality, horticulture and pesticides from Extension specialists in the College of Agriculture. Other contributors to the system include the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture (PDA).

"It's a whole world of information right at your fingertips," said Greene County resident Kelly Cratty. Cratty logs onto PENpages from his home computer to access horticulture information.

Harold Schantz of Schantz Orchards in Lehigh County uses PENpages for updates on pest information and spraying schedules. "I find it a necessity during the growing season," Schantz said.

Dan Griffith, Indiana County dairy farmer and PENpages user, said he accesses the system several times a week, especially for the daily news summary and Ag A.M. provided by the USDA. Ag A.M. is a summary of agricultural news as reported in

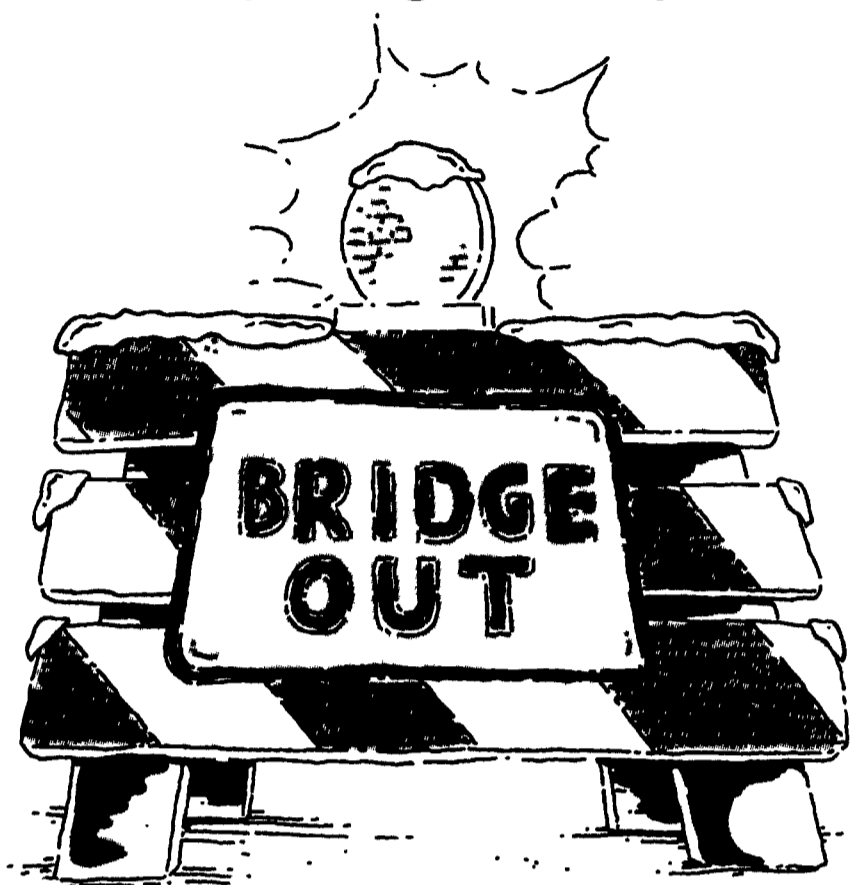
the major media and trade publications. "I couldn't get that information somewhere else," Griffith said. "Our paper just doesn't carry that kind of stuff."

Griffith also used the reference section of PENpages. In addition to news items and alerts, PENpages contains over 2,500 reference documents dealing with agriculture topics like dairy farming and livestock production.

PENpages is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Anyone with access to a computer, modem and appropriate software can log on to the system. A telephone number in each county means that Pennsylvania residents can access PENpages with no phone charges, unless it is a long distance call to their county extension office. PENpages can be accessed using most home computers. Pennsylvania residents can get a free PENpages User Guide, Version 3.0 from the Penn State Cooperative Extension or by calling 757-9657. The User Guide gives software and hardware specification as well as step-by-step instruction for logging onto PENpages. PENpages was designed for easy use. Schantz noted that he had no problem logging on from his home computer. "I'm not a real computer buff," he admitted, "but it's simple to use, and it keeps getting easier."



just don't
let anything detour you,



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winter.

THE VALUE OF DHI RECORDS: While DHIA members appreciate the value of production and management records, some information is more beneficial than others. In a recent survey, Wisconsin cooperators ranked the various record systems on the basis of usefulness of the information in management of the dairy. The results of the survey are shown in Table 1.

Management Information	% Response-Yes
Reproduction	91.6
Improve production	91.8
Feeding	89.1
Culling	81.5
Health	76.9
Identification	69.7
Sales	52.2

The greatest value of the reproductive information is that it identifies potential problems such as, cows and heifers not yet bred and animals to pregnancy check. Failure to breed back on time doesn't result in sick cows or low production — it simply reduces net income. The area of "improve production" is vividly demonstrated by comparing DHI cows with non-tested cows. In the U.S., this difference is about 5,000 lb. of milk per cow per year.

MOST PENNSYLVANIA ICE CREAM IS TOPS

Prices of one-half gallon vanilla ice cream samples purchased from Pennsylvania stores varied from \$1.69 to almost \$4.00. These prices reflected the composition of milkfat and total solids and quality of vanilla flavor. There is a price, flavor and body to satisfy everyone. Generally the higher priced products were the highest in milkfat and total solids and only pure vanilla was used for flavoring.

Results of testing and evaluation on 221 samples were sent to manufacturers. Net weights averaged about 2.40 pounds per half gallon and 85% of the samples were above 2.25 pounds. Milkfat content varied from about 10% to as high as 16% with an

average of about 11.0%. Total solids content ranged from about 36% to more than 42%, but averaged about 39%. Flavor, body and texture evaluations were made.

Trained dairy product judges rated 82% of the flavors in the acceptable to excellent range while 88% of the body and texture comments were acceptable to excellent. Generally, you get what you pay for, the higher the price, the better the flavor, body and texture.

PENNSYLVANIA MILK BEST IN NORTHEAST

During 1987, 2,343 samples of milk were purchased from 602 stores in Pennsylvania. When compared to 455 samples from other northeastern states, Pennsylvania milk was the best. This was true even though many of the PA processing plants are small and the data includes samples from about 70 farm juggling operations. All samples were kept refrigerated and tested within 48 hours of purchase.

Only 13% of the PA stores had milk in the dairy case at a temperature above 45 degrees, the regulatory maximum. Forty-seven percent of the stores had milk at 40 degrees or below. Pennsylvania had a five percent advantage for temperatures of 40 degrees or less and had four percent fewer stores in the 45 degrees and above category.

There were five percent fewer objectionable flavor samples in the PA milk. Strong rancid flavor accounted for about half of the samples rated poor for taste for both in and out-of-state samples. There were five percent fewer objectionable flavor samples in 1987 compared to 1986.

Bacterial quality was similar for PA and Northeastern samples. Ninety percent of them met the state regulatory maximums. Total solids values were lower in the other northeastern states but PA had six percent of the samples below the minimum of 11.5% compared to 3 percent for the other states.

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