

# Forage Preservatives And The Farm Bill Are Topics At York Dairy Day

BY JOYCE BUPP

York Co. Correspondent

YORK — Dairy producers attending York's Dairy Day February 18 discussed a range of topics, during the morning management session sponsored by the Extension Service.

Speakers included Scott Hodgson, Beacon Feeds; Boyd Cook of Dairymen, Inc.; extension area farm management agent Roland Freund; Dr. Michael Radebaugh, Parkton, Maryland, Veterinarian; and Sue Beshore, Dairy of Distinction committee.

Speeding the dry-down time of mown hay reduces quality loss and lessens exposure time to rain, Hodgson reminded York dairy producers.

According to Hodgson, 50 acres of alfalfa takes an estimated 12 hours to cut and 12 hours to bale. Stabilizers and preservatives, which hasten the drying of thick

hay stems, help reduce the quality-loss time between cutting and baling.

Drying agents used alone shorten drydown by about one day. Applying both drying agents and acid products to hay at cutting, may under ideal conditions, allow for mowing and baling the same day.

Cost estimate for such materials is about \$6 per acre, plus an estimated \$1800 to \$2000 for the investment in application equipment.

"You must get the agent on the stems and not the leaves," Hodgson emphasized. "Apply it after the hay is run through the cutting part of the system."

### Federal Support Programs

Boyd Cook, manager of Dairymen, Inc.'s Middle Atlantic Division, reviewed the recent history of the government milk support program, noting how supports became so high in the late '70's and early '80's that it was fairly profitable to produce milk. However, the government became the buyer of much of it.

With the 1985 Farm Bill came changes, including the 15-cent per hundredweight mandatory promotion checkoff and the whole herd buyout program. Commercial removal of milk is up ten percent, attributed to increased advertising and favorable retail prices. But reduced production following the buyout is now climbing so quickly that another 50-cent support price cut appears likely in January of 1989.

According to Cook, the Farm Bill legislation has a clause permitting another buyout program.

"That's not likely to happen during a major election year," is Cook's assessment.

On their checks for January milk, producers were assessed 2.5 cents per hundred toward self-funding of dairy program costs, under the mandated Gramm-Rudman budget deficit cutbacks. The assessment was an industry-sought alternative to deeper support price slashes, which would have cost dairymen considerably more.

Numerous self-help solutions to the milk surplus problem are being evaluated. Among those possibilities are the capping of federal dairy program costs at a pre-determined level, with over-production discouraged through price penalties.

A limited and regionally targeted herd reduction program, funded by producer assessment, is being studied by the Dairy Stabilization Committee and Producer Task Force of the National Milk Producers Federation. Under this proposal, herd reductions would be targeted to regions, based on their expected CCC sales.

Cook additionally reviewed the over-order pricing obtained for producers through the efforts of the Middle Atlantic Cooperative Milk Marketing Agency (MACMMA).

"Profit benchmarks", says management specialist Freund, are spot check figures which can be used to gauge a dairy business' financial efficiency. Guidelines range from very good to serious, and spotlight problem areas in production and cash flow.

Freund's benchmarks at the very good side of the capital scale included one hundred percent owner equity, per-cow facility investment of under \$2,000 book value and equipment investment of \$250. A 40-percent owner equity, showing no improvement, and per-cow investment of \$3,000 for facility and \$500 for equipment, point to potential serious financial problems.

Other measurements of profitable operations include \$230 return over \$100 feed cost, as opposed to \$150 over \$100 for problem ones. Milk to grain ratio of 4.5 is positive, with a ratio of 2 considered serious. Calving inter-

vals of 12 months are ideal; a 15-month calving interval is of concern.

Mastitis costs the dairy industry an estimated \$2 billion per year, or an average of \$182 per cow, noted Dr. Michael Radebaugh. Somatic cell counts on DHIA sheets offer a gauge of problem cows. Radebaugh recommends an ideal of 90 percent of the herd, and 100 percent of heifers, have SCC's in the low range. Other goals would be Standard Plate Counts of 5,000, and PI counts of 10,000.

"The goal of mastitis prevention is a clean, dry, non-traumatized teat," summed up the Parkton dairy-specialty vet.

### Dairy of Distinction

Dairy families interested in applying for the Dairy of Distinction award have until April 15 to file their application, according to Sue Beshore, New Cumberland. A regional chairperson last year for the program, Beshore noted that the shipping of quality milk will be checked before a farm applicant is considered for the award this year. The handler or cooperative which markets the milk for each applicant will be contacted to determine if the quality of milk sent from the farm is acceptable.

Farms are primarily judged on their neat and attractive appearance, from the road, which the motoring public would see. Inspections are made from roadside only, with judges not entering the property or buildings.

## Atlantic District 5 Locals To Meet

SOUTHAMPTON — The Witmer, West Lampeter and Millersville Locals of Atlantic Dairy Cooperative District 5 will hold their annual dinner meeting March 3 at 12 p.m. at the Bird-In-Hand Family Restaurant.

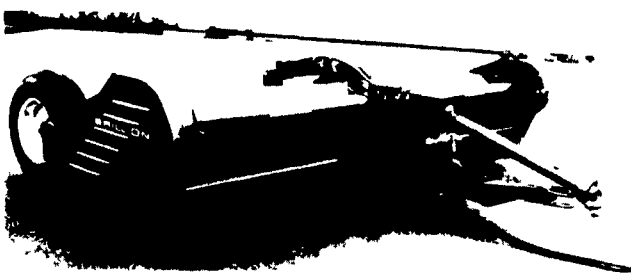
James S. Fraher, Atlantic's economist, will be the guest speaker. Fraher will report on cooperative business and dairy issues.

A business meeting will be conducted to elect officers, delegates and alternate delegates for the coming year. Current presidents are: Mervin Bare, Witmer Local; Roger Mills, West Lampeter Local; and Glenn Binkley, Millersville Local.

In addition, a 50-year membership plaque will be awarded to E. Curtis and Betty K. Funk of Lancaster.

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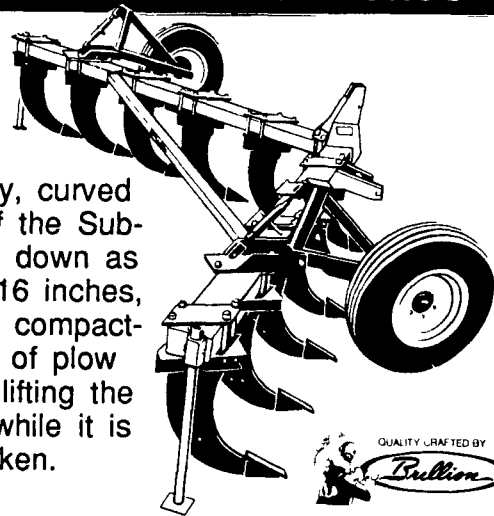
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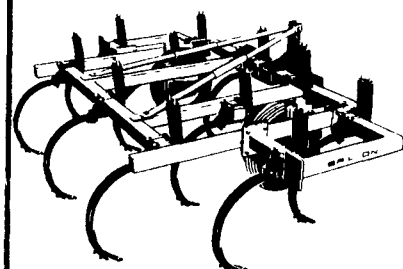
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