

# Official Says Rural N.Y. Tied To Urban Residents

AUBURN, NY — The message must get out, that rural New York is bonded — economically, socially and in other ways as well — to the state's millions of urban residents, Joseph Gerace, Director of the Office of Rural Affairs, told a Cayuga County group last week.

Gerace was the guest speaker at the Cayuga County Farm Bureau's annual Rural-Urban Dinner in Auburn. Each year, local units of the statewide farming organization invite urban friends and associates to acquaint them with rural life and to underscore the need for mutual cooperation.

"We are taking much the same approach," Gerace said. "The Office of Rural Affairs is sponsoring a Rural New York Showcase at the Empire State Plaza in Albany the week of May 23. The main idea is to focus more attention on the important contributions of our three million rural New Yorkers who make up the third largest rural population in the United States.

"We will be holding a reception for the State Legislators and Agency Heads on May 24, during which they will have the chance to tour the displays which are coming from throughout the 49,000-square miles of rural New York. We want our 15,000,000 urban residents to know that they depend, more than many of them realize, on the people and products of the state's 44 rural counties."

"For too many years, rural New York has been overshadowed by the big-city skyscrapers," the ORA Director said. "Take Cayuga County, for example. Its farm output is the fifth highest in the state and its logging industry, in connection with neighboring Seneca County, recently had an annual output of a half-billion board-feet of lumber. That's enough to put a foot-wide board more than three times around the world!"

In addition to the Rural Showcase, ORA is in the process of creating "RAIN," a database to provide rural areas with information on financial and technical assistance available from state agencies for a variety of projects.

There also will be a series of regional meetings to discuss the needs of the rural areas, by region, with the participants invited to suggest some solutions to those concerns. The first such meeting will be in the Mohawk Valley in June, with the date and location to be announced.

In July, Cerace told the group, the Office of Rural Affairs will sponsor a pair of day-long conferences, one on rural health issues and the other on solid waste. Each meeting will give rural New Yorkers the opportunity to discuss the problems unique to their communities in the areas of health and solid waste. Hundreds of participants are expected from throughout the state to Albany to discuss their concerns with the commissioners of the departments involved. The Rural Health Conference, co-sponsored by the Department of Health, is planned for July 7, and the Rural Solid Waste Conference, co-sponsored by the Environmental Conservation Department, will be held July 21.

The Office of Rural Affairs was created in 1987 as the nation's first cabinet-level state agency dealing specifically with rural issues.

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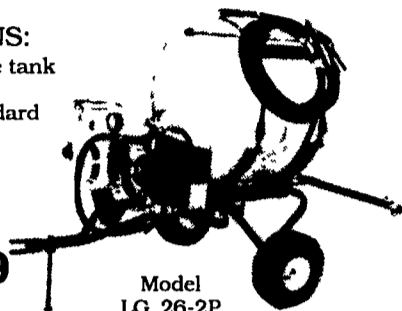


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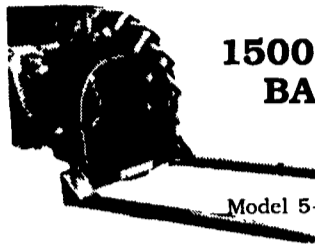
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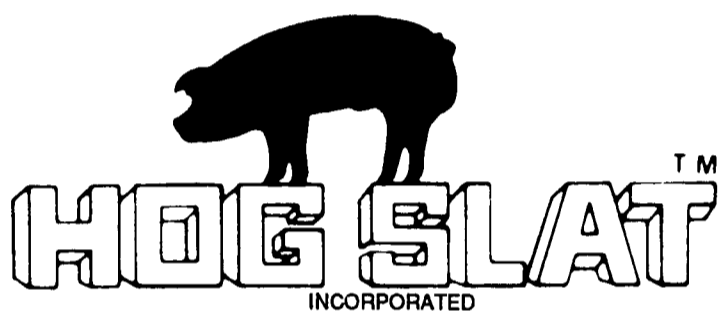
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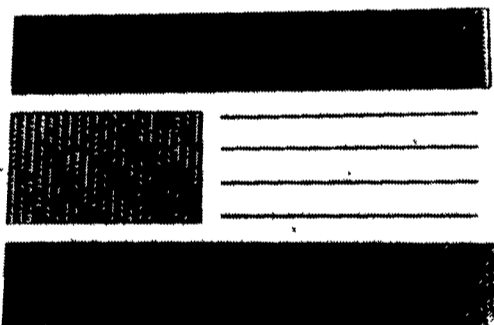
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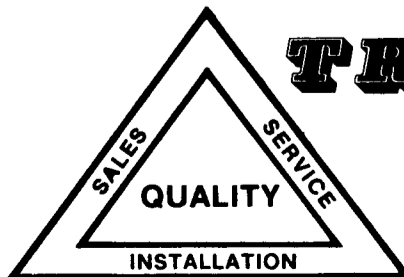


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