Lancaster Farming

VOL. 33 No. 24 | Five Sections | Lancaster Farming, Saturday, April 23, 1988 | 50¢ Per Copy | $10.00 Per Year

Risks And Benefits Of Ag Bio-Technology Discussed At Conference

BY
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Managing Editor

NEW BRUNSWICK, NJ — Enough pent-up emotions have been generated by scientists, government regulators, journalists, and environmentalists to produce a lively discussion at the Agricultural Biotechnology Conference here this week. Some said we received more promise than product in the last ten years. Others said don't tell me anymore about the miracle of biotechnology, tell me about what it's going to do to me and my neighbors. Some said we must move ahead with the new knowledge we have or our competitors will beat us. Others said there's too much we don't yet know about the permanent side effects that may come from gene manipulations in animals, plants, and microorganisms.

Some said the public is more informed and more confused than ever. Others said the owners of proprietory information are too secretive. Too much government regulation already. Not enough safeguards. Ordinary biology can make advances fast enough. Biotechnology is a hope of the future.

Many different ideas were proposed, but almost everyone agreed biotechnology is awesome.

POINT/COUNTERPOINT

At this third of four regional conferences, an intense point/counterpoint discussion by Jack Doyle, Director Agricultural Resources Project, Environmental Policy Institute, and Fred Smith, President, Competitive Enterprise Institute, discussed issues of management and assessment of agricultural biotechnology.

Doyle favored the use of what

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Johnes: Manheim Family's Battle With A Deadly Disease

BY PAT PURCELL

MANHEIM — There is a wolf dressed in sheep's clothes. You could get rid of the wolf, if you knew where he was hiding, but you don't know until it is too late.

This is what Johnes is to dairy farmers who have it in their herd. They don't know it is there until a cow shows the symptoms of weight loss, loss of milk production, and severe diarrhea. By this time it is too late to save the cow and the others which may already be infected, but not showing clinical symptoms yet. Consequently, it is not apparent which animals are shedding the disease and spreading it through the herd.

This disease is not discriminating. It strikes beautiful, strong, healthy, promising young heifers and also cows who may be in their second and third lactation. It does not discriminate between the registered or grade animal. And the frightening part about this disease is that when the farmer realizes it is in his herd, it is too late to save the animals. The disease is usually contracted before a calf is three months old and it may incubate for several years until the stress of freshening the first, second, or third time brings about the clinical symptoms. When it reaches the clinical stages, which it can in a few weeks after calving, the animal loses weight rapidly, drops off in milk production, and will suffer from severa diarrhea

There is no cure for Johnes. There are no treatments available. And the test for Johnes, which previously has had a waiting list of up to one year, takes three months to get the results.

Any unsuspecting dairy farmer can purchase a young heifer from popular sires and high-indexed dams at a dispersal sale, breed promotional sale, or from an individual farmer, only to find out later that animal was carrying Johnes. From the time of purchases until clinical signs become apparent, that animal can proceed to infect other herdmates. The silent enemy then gains a foothold in the herd

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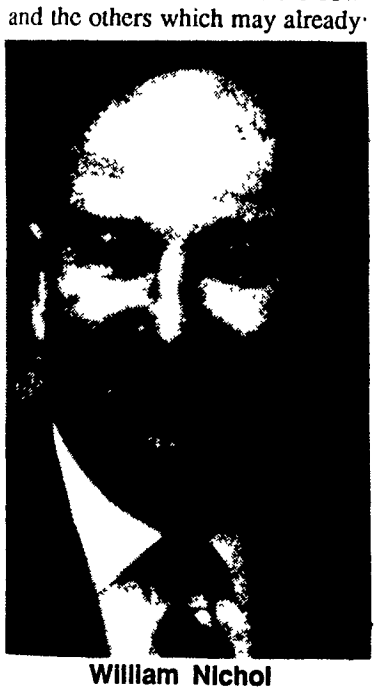

William Nichol

Boyd Wolff

Dairy Science Club Names Honorees

STATE COLLEGE (Centre) — The Penn State Dairy Science Club is scheduled to honor three industry leaders at its annual banquet tonight at State College. William Nichol, Executive Secretary of the Pennsylvania Holstein Association, is the 1988 Expo Dedicatee. David Naugle is the Young Dairyman Award winner. And Boyd Wolff, State Agriculture Secretary, has been chosen the Distinguished Alumnus.

According to the club's spring newsletter, Nichol, a 1952 ag economics graduate, has served PHA for 25 years, and has developed a top sales and export program. He was instrumental in establishing a Nittany Lion Fall Classic.

Naugle, graduated in 1983, will receive the award that's given to a recent graduate who has contri-

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Melinda Musser, St. Thomas, admires the chick she and her classmates hatched in the 4-H Embryology project completed recently at James Buchanan Middle School.

Incubators Add Eggcitement To Franklin Classrooms

BY NANCY MILLS
Penn State Extension

MERCERSBURG (Franklin) — If sixth-grade science students at James Buchanan Middle School paid a little less attention than usual to their conventional studies one recent Wednesday, it was a forgivable offence. After all, who could study as 32 chicks, born and unborn and in-between, chiseled their way to life in incubators at the back of the room?

The James Buchanan kids are among those sixth and seventh graders at nine Franklin County schools who will have witnessed the miracle of birth right in their classrooms this spring, as part of a study of embryology, sponsored by the Franklin County 4-H. The Franklin County Extension Service provided eggs and incubators, according to County Agent, Bob Kessler, who brought the idea to Franklin County after seeing its success in New York. During the three-to-four-week long project, the students were made temporary 4-H members, using 4-H project books to complete the embryology projects.

The eggs, which were each numbered on top and marked with an "x" on the bottom, were turned three times a day by students, who took turns at the job, according to Eric Shields, a student in one of Mrs. Swailes' science classes. Furthermore, the temperature and, just as importantly, the humidity of the incubators had to be monitored, said students.

After the three-week study, Mrs. Swailes' students had become young authorities on the early

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Youth Show Off At Little Livestock Expo

BY JODI RICHARDS
Centre Co. Correspondent

UNIVERSITY PARK — The 71st Little I was held on Saturday, April 16, at Penn State's ag arena. What is the Little I? The Little I, formerly known as the Little International Livestock Exposition, is an opportunity for students to "show off" their ability to fit and train livestock.

The fisrt Penn State Little I was held in 1917. At that time, the Block and Bridle Club was not responsible for the expo, it was organized by students interested in showing and handling livestock. Since 1924, the Penn State chapter of the National Block and Bridle Club has organized and financed the show.

The students who particpate are assigned the animal they work with six weeks prior to the show. On this day, the participants draw for the animals and then train and fit them into show quality. The competitors work with Angus, Polled Hereford, and Simmental heifers; American quarter horses; Dorset and Suffolk ewes; and Yorkshire gilts, crossbred gilts,

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