

Dairy Auctioneers

(Continued from Page A35)

It's almost like buying a buyer to be there to set the floor."

A fitting crew and good barn help are also necessary.

"Fitting can be as simple as clipping and washing the tails, or it can be as in-depth as a complete clipping of the heads, tails — basically what you might call showing ready. That depends on the quality of the animal you're going to be selling.

For moving the cattle from the barn to the ring, Allen prefers to employ people he knows and trusts. Some farmers like to use friends and relatives, he said, but volunteers often get tired and lose interest midway through the auction.

Livestock transporters are notified of the upcoming auction so that they can be at the disposal of the buyers. "If a farmer/buyer doesn't know who he's going to get to haul his cow home, he might be a little hesitant about bidding," Allen explained.

Loading help remains on the site for about 1½ hours following the auction. "Unless the buyer has told us differently, we milk the cattle out as soon as the auction's over," Allen said. "Believe it or not, you'll have some farmers who will want to take that milk home."

Don't overlook the bidders' comfort, the auctioneer cautioned.

Make certain there is adequate seating, food service, etc.

Tagging cattle would seem to be a simple procedure, but there can be problems. Whatever method you choose, the important thing is that the numbers stay on the cows.

"You can use the sale barn tag with the sale barn glue, if you like. I personally don't like to use that type of a tag. I have my own printed on cardboard with a heavier glue. If cattle are running loose, they can lick off the paper ones."

Other alternatives include commercial marking crayons, a bangle tag in the ear or neck tag.

The auctioneer must make certain the client has contacted a veterinarian to do the necessary blood work, pregnancy testing and health charts, Allen said.

He recommends producing a catalog for each auction, although some may not be as elaborate as others. "For 90 percent of the auctions I conduct — where I'm sale manager and auctioneer — I make them in-house," Allen said.

"You had better be pretty sure the information is correct," he continued. "I guarantee nothing because I'm not the one who's pregnancy checking the cows, I'm not the one who's doing the health testing. That's left up to the vet or your information that comes from the owner. But we do our best to

present the information to the best of our knowledge.

"If you don't have production records, you can use what they've been sending to the milk dairy. Sometimes that means a lot more to potential buyers than do DHIA records."

In setting the advertising budget for an auction, Allen asks himself how far he would be willing to drive to buy what the farmer is selling. "If you're getting into some real pedigreed cows, you can go nationwide," he said. "In the Holstein business, that would be *Holstein World*. Or you can go with state, regional or just local papers.

"We sometimes use radio, but radio advertising in our area is a spontaneous, last-minute reminder. I personally don't do a lot of direct mailing, although there are some sale managers who do. I see nothing wrong with it."

Both Allen and Hammond believe in hiring consultants. "When you hire the right people who know the right information, it makes you look good," said Allen.

"We got out of sale management mainly because my interest is in farmers selling the 50- and 60-cow dairies around the upper Northeast," said Hammond. "I well realize that's probably a business that's shortly going to come to a close. The successful sale manager today has to be able to cover a lot broader scope than that."

Hammond has a strong em-

pathy for the operators of small family dairies, but believes their day is past.

"For those who are interested in selling livestock, I think there'll be a lot of that kind of business out there in the next two years," Hammond said. "Again, I have a soft place in my heart for these people, and I'm very interested in them having a good auction."

C. Sherman Allen is owner of C. Sherman Allen Auctioneer & Associates in Conneaut Lake, Pa., and a partner with his brother in a 500-acre dairy farm. A past president of the Northwest Pennsylv-

ania Auctioneers Association, he is also a member of the national, Pennsylvania and Ohio associations. He is active in a number of livestock, farm, fraternal and civic groups.

Howard Hammond is a professional pedigree announcer from Corry, Pa. He is associated with his family's purebred Holstein operation, Concord Ridge Farm, which milks 150 cows. Hammond merchandises dairy cattle worldwide and is involved in the appraisal of cattle for insurance companies and lending institutions.

Keystone Cornucopia

HARRISBURG (Dauphin Co.) — Since 1981, the State Council of Farm Organizations has been pairing agricultural and food industry leaders with state legislators and policymakers over plates of Pennsylvania produced delicacies. The Keystone Cornucopia has become the premiere food celebration for the agricultural industry.

This year's dinner is scheduled for January 29th at the Harrisburg Marriott Hotel and Resort. Approximately 400 food and agricultural representatives are expected to attend and as many as 100 legislators may join in the festivities. Tickets are still available for \$30 (prior to January 19th); call 717-234-5001 to order.

Entertainment at the dinner will be provided by Bryan Deitrich an

upper-Dauphin County pianist. The evening's speaker has not been confirmed at this time but will be a key person in agriculture's future. The usual distribution of gift baskets of Pennsylvania products to the legislators will occur directly before the speaker.

The food industry is Pennsylvania's number one industry and the Pennsylvania State Council of Farm Organizations is devoted to promoting that industry. It is comprised of nearly 70 agriculture-related groups, organizations, and businesses. They work toward the solution of mutual problems and the support of constructive agriculture-related legislation.

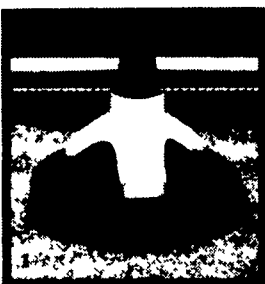
More information on the Council itself can be obtained from Michelle Snyder, Executive Secretary, PA State Grange, 717-234-5001.

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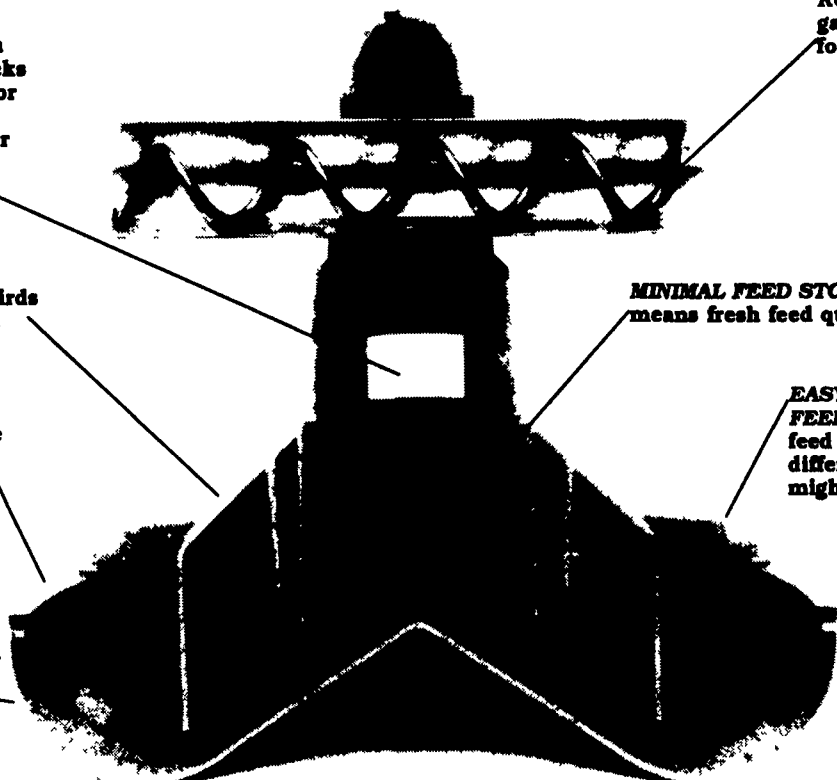
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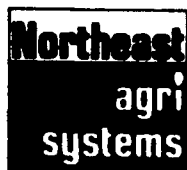
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