

# Livestock Notes

## Wool Pool Update

The directors of the Berks County Sheep and Wool Growers rejected the wool pool bid of 40¢ per pound at the State Wool Sale recently. The directors have met and have reviewed a number of options which will be decided at the annual meeting on May 10th.

The options include

- Not having a Berks County wool pool in 1990.
- Having a pool on June 30 or July 28.
- Having a pool in the fall.
- Wool could be taken to other markets. If a pool is held under #2 and #3, there is no guarantee the price would be higher than the 40¢ bid received at the state sale.

If a pool is held later this year, it is essential that wool be stored properly.

## Animal Rightists Use New Tactic

Reports from California note animal rights activists are turning to law enforcement officials to execute their program. The California Cattlemen's Association relates that four of its members were cited by the Los Angeles Department of Animal Control for failure to provide their cattle with "shelter and protection from the weather." The citations carry up to a \$5,000 fine and jail if the offense is found to be willful.

## PA. Hampshire Field Day

For anyone interested in Hampshires, the annual field day will be held on:

Date: May 19, 1990; Time: 10:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m.; Place: Blue Acre Farm, home of the Brubaker and Fleener families near Robesonia; Program: Judging contest, marketing lamb and breeding lamb evaluation, breed association meeting, and speakers on health issues; Lunch: Sandwiches and drink will be provided. Please bring covered dish, place setting and chairs.

## Beware Of Toxoplasmosis

Lots of cats and confined sheep (ewes and feeder lambs) do not mix well, especially when cats seek the warmth of a hay feeder and the convenience of ground feed as a substitute sand box.

A couple reports have indicated the possibility of sheep abortions because of toxoplasmosis parasite. For a ewe to abort from toxoplasmosis, she must contract it when she is pregnant. After the first infection, the ewe will not abort again, even if reinfected.

Symptoms include loss of appetite, weakness, difficult breathing with stillborn, or birth of weak lambs. In young lambs, much the same symptoms occur, but some muscular incoordination and sub-

sequent death can result, primarily from starvation.

Sheep contract toxoplasmosis by eating oocysts, the egg-like form of the parasite, in contaminated feed or water. Cats are the only animals known to pass the parasite in their feces. They contract the parasite from eating other infected animals.

No effective vaccine or cure for toxoplasmosis is known.

To prevent the disease, reduce the amount of toxoplasmosis by avoiding contamination of sheep feed and water with cat feces, and by preventing cats from eating raw meat.

## Pregnancy-Testing Ewes

Several methods of pregnancy testing ewes have been evaluated at the experiment station of Dubois, Idaho. Some of these methods are available to sheep producers now. Others could be available soon.

### A. Pregmatic 3:

The Pregmatic 3 is a simple and affordable ultrasonic device that could be used by any properly trained technician. The overall accuracy of the device is 97 percent when it is used in mature ewes at day-51 or later of gestation. Some studies have shown the error rate to be as high as 52 percent if ewes are tested before

day-60 of pregnancy. Accuracy is directly related to the gestation stage at which the animals are tested.

### B. Real-Time Ultrasonic Scanning:

An accuracy of 100 percent has been reported with this device when ewes are tested between 36 and 93 days of gestation. This method is also quite accurate in diagnosing twins or triplets. The main problem with this device is its cost. Nevertheless, a wool pool or other organization could purchase the device and hire a technician. The cost per producer and per ewe could be minimized in this manner.

### C. PSPB (Pregnancy-specific protein B) blood testing:

PSPB has been isolated from bovine placental membranes. A valid, sensitive radio-immunoassay has been developed to measure PSPB in bovine blood and has been shown to be a reliable test for pregnancy testing cows. This test has been adapted for use in sheep and has proven to be 100 percent accurate in ewes after day-30 of gestation. The test also shows some promise in detecting twins or triplets. At the present time, the procedure is to take a blood sample from each ewe and send it to the lab. It is anticipated that in the future the PSPB test will be conducted by placing a dipstick or test strip into a few drops of blood and observing a color change.

Pregnancy testing in large commercial flocks may be impractical. Nevertheless, there are several large commercial operations north of Utah that are pregnancy testing

ewe lambs on a regular basis. In addition, pregnancy rates in older ewes are reasonably high. However, rates in flocks of ewe lambs are often near or less than 50 percent. Pregnancy testing may not be economically important in the former case, but in the latter there may be a considerable advantage. An

owner could cull non-pregnant ewe lambs early and still sell them at lamb prices. If the owner waits until after the lambing season, the animals must be sold at ewe prices and the advantage is not realized.

Sources:

Provo Sheep News and Veterinary News, Nov. 1989.

## NCGA, Others Oppose Payment Limitations

WASHINGTON, D.C. — The National Corn Growers Association (NCGA) and other agricultural organizations recently asked Congress to reject any new attempts to target farm program benefits or impose new means tests for program participants.

"Such efforts to limit payments would prove to be damaging to those who are intended beneficiaries — the typical commercial-sized family farm — and would render our farm programs ineffective," the groups said in a letter to members of both the House and Senate Agriculture Committees.

Rep. Dick Arney (D-TX) has proposed ending program payments for farmers with adjusted gross incomes of \$100,000 or more. The House Agriculture Committee will also consider a form of targeting — a 40,000 bushel limit on indexed target prices for corn proposed by Rep. Tim Penny (D-MN).

The groups argued against Arney's proposal because:

- Gross income does not necessarily correlate with profitability.

Income measures will affect producers of commodities such as livestock differently from crop producers.

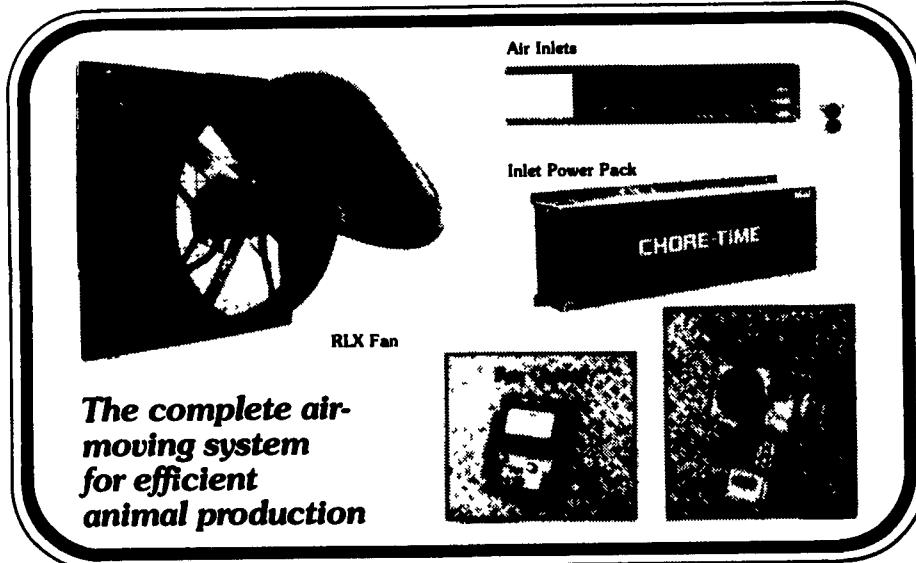
This type of limit will discourage diversification of the farming operation at a time when much of the policy direction for consideration and environmental purposes would encourage more integrated production practices.

Large producers who are forced out of the program will grow additional quantities of these crops and disrupt the production adjustment objectives of the program. Those still in the program will pay the cost in terms of higher set-aside requirements.

Co-signing the letter with NCGA were the American Farm Bureau Federation, American Soybean Association, National Association of Wheat Growers, National Cattlemen's Association, National Cotton Council, National Council of Farmer Cooperatives, National Milk Producers Federation, National Pork Producers Council, and Rice Growers Legislative Group.

# CHORE-TIME

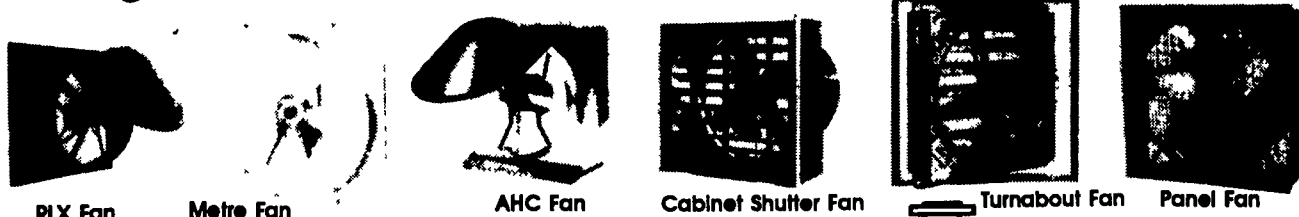
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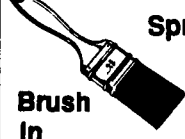
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