

Lancaster Holstein Field Day Held

EVERETT NEWSWANGER
Managing Editor

WILLOW STREET (Lancaster Co.)—In the beautiful setting of the lawn on the John Howard and family's Howcrest Farm, the Lancaster County Holstein annual field day was held with good attendance.

As usual, a judging contest started the evening activities with the excellent type found in the Howcrest herd providing stiff competition. Games for the children and a bar-b-que chicken dinner added to the festivities.

Pete Blodgett from Landmark Genetics was the judge for the contest and featured speaker of the evening. Blodgett said in a breeding program, dairymen should select for a balance between high production "with all the yield you can get, especially protein" and functional type. "You need longevity and reproductive soundness,"

Blodgett said.

"Dairyman must realize that they are competing for their share of the dairy product sales on a world market. And to do this, they must fine tune both their business and herd management. They must be willing to make changes, particularly in some of the new technologies that come along in breeding."

Blodgett said a tool for breeding that is new on the horizon is in the field of molecular genetics. Several systems of DNA markers will identify young bulls and females that have certain advantages in production and type traits by a simple blood test. "Because of the economy in the dairy industry, dairymen will need to be quick to take advantage of new technologies," Blodgett said. "The dairymen that survive will be the better managers."

In the judging contest the fol-



Lancaster County Holstein field day crowd on the lawn at Howcrest.

lowing winners were named.

LADIES DIVISION: 1, Susan Hess; 2, Juliet Wagner; 3, Sheila

Balmer.

MEN'S DIVISION: 1, Roger Slusher; 2, Darrel Mills; 3, Dennis

Kulp.

YOUTH DIVISION: 1, Matt Welk; 2, Troy Getz; 3, Matt Kolb.

Penn Ag Seminar Explores Views On Nutrient Management

VERNON ACHENBACH JR.
Lancaster Farming Staff

LANCASTER (Lancaster Co.) — Manure from animal production facilities and general nutrient management were the focus of a Monday feed industry seminar held at Eden Resort in Lancaster.

About 30 representatives of feed and agricultural businesses attended the seminar, sponsored by the PennAg Industries Association. The program was moderated by David Brubaker, executive vice president of PennAg.

There were five speakers on nutrient management during the afternoon program. They were Paul Swartz, with the state Department of Environmental Resources; Tom Sexton, with the Chesapeake Bay Foundation; Walter Peechatka, with PDA; Bruce Limpert, director of financial services for Wenger's Feed Mill; and Cindy Dunn, spokesperson for the Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay.

In addition to the five nutrient management speakers, Earl Haas, a feed program specialist with the state Department of Agriculture (PDA) updated the group on two pieces of proposed legislation concerning animal feeds.

Apparently, neither piece of PDA-created animal feed legislation will become law before the Legislature's summer recess, because of the budget crisis and because the proposals have yet to be sponsored by a legislator.

One proposal would change labeling, licensing and fee structure associated with the handling, manufacture and sale of animal feeds.

The other proposal would amend existing law, which forbids backhauling of food materials destined for human consumption in vehicles previously used to haul waste, to include animal feeds and feed components.

Nutrient management legislation could apparently have a chance of becoming law before current session ends.

Proposed nutrient management legislation is currently in the House Appropriations Committee, having been reported out of the House Agriculture and Rural Affairs Committee on June 10.

In brief, the proposed law would set up the state Conservation Commission to create criteria for establishing nutrient management plans

on farms and to act as the enforcement agency; establish a nutrient management advisory board consisting of representatives from each segment of the agriculture industry most affected by calls for nutrient management; give responsibility for local oversight of nutrient management to the county-level soil conservation district offices; and direct the PDA to establish a program for testing and licensing people to create nutrient management plans.

Some amendments were made to the legislation, HB 496, before coming out of the House agriculture committee:

- The enforcement authority was changed to the commission, rather than with DER;

- farmer liability protection was added so that landowners with nutrient management plans in effect would be protected to the fullest extent of the judicial system from civil and criminal prosecution;

- and wording was added to strengthen the state's preeminence over local ordinances concerning nutrient management.

Although it wasn't mentioned during the seminar, efforts to have state funds set aside to pay for the statewide nutrient management program have already been made — allocations for the nutrient management program have been included in the House Democrats' proposal for a 1991-92 state spending package.

However, as of press time, the Democrats have yet to propose a method for paying for the spending plan.

Irregardless of the current political position of nutrient management, the range of views and opinion on nutrient management presented by the speakers was broad.

The views ranged from comments on the need for a whole cultural change in attitude and understanding about environmental-human relationships to comments about possible on-farm practices in order to fulfill anticipated manure/nutrient management laws.

Tom Sexton, with the 78,000-member Chesapeake Bay Foundation, said his perspective on nutrient management is to seek permanent solutions to all nutrient problems which affect the nation's environmental stability — not just agricultural problems.

The 25-year-old Chesapeake Bay Foundation, which Sexton represents, is an advocacy group. Its members actively and aggressively seek to clean up the Chesapeake Bay, which because of nutrient overloading, has developed a layer of water with no life-sustaining oxygen.

Restoring the ability of the bay's waters to provide oxygen rich waters for fish, shellfish and other forms of life within the aquatic food chain is not the organization's only goal. The bay foundation seeks to aid in the maintenance and preservation of the bay's aquatic and relate wildlife.

"We're not looking just at farms," Sexton said. "We're looking at development in a big way."

However, since studies have indicated that Pennsylvania agriculture is a major source of "non-point" pollution, and since governors from those states with watersheds draining into the Chesapeake have pledged financial and human resources to clean up the bay by certain deadlines, the foundation is involved in motivating changes toward reduction of nitrogen and phosphorus elements into the Susquehanna River watershed.

The Susquehanna River is the main body of water originating in Pennsylvania which affects the quality of the bay.

According to Sexton, a recently released book "Turning The Tide" offers a "state of the bay" report. "It is based on hundred of interviews with scientists," Sexton said.

In summarizing the contents of the book for the group of businessmen, Sexton said reports show that nitrogen levels continue to climb while phosphorus levels are dropping.

In helping to achieve a reduction in the nitrogen flow into the Susquehanna and thus the bay, Sexton said he would like farmers to consider the concept of adopting a nutrient balance on the farms — become efficient in using the nitrogen-bearing wastes; limiting the addition of commercial, outside sources of nitrogen to farming operations; and going to a permitting situation.

In the permitting situation, those desiring a high animal density operation would be required to submit a proposal and then be

reviewed and permitted to expand beyond the normal ability of the specific farm's ecology to use the additional nutrients resulting from the increase animal population.

Sexton said he also supports targeting certain problem farms; moving away from using best management practices (BMP) to using best management systems (BMS); and controlling human growth in certain areas. Specifically he said he would like to see urban sprawl controlled, because of the additional problems with water quality presented with human wastes and surface water flows and quality.

He also said that the importance of air deposition in aggravating the nitrogen level of the bay is only starting to be taken into account.

As far as on-the-farm operation of the program Sexton said he prefers the conservation district have responsibility, but as far as operation, most offices lack a good history of eye-to-eye community involvement.

He suggested a community outreach program to be conducted by the conservation districts in order to get more public awareness and involvement.

Sexton said Lebanon County's program probably has the best record as far as going out to the farm and discussing issues.

However, farms may not be as big a contributor to bay degradation as was once believed. According to Sexton, the Environmental Protection Agency figures are changing continually.

When figuring in the amount of nitrogen attributable to air deposition, the amount of non-point nitrogen thought to come from agriculture may be reduced by 85 percent from previous estimates, he said.

Walt Peechatka, with the department of agriculture, said he sees the whole issue of nutrient management and the superficially different viewpoints as a continuum. On one end is the preservationist extremist and on the other is the stout Jeffersonian landowner with everyone else somewhere in the middle.

He said the state Department of Agriculture is in the middle, but clearly aligned more closely to the farmer.

The distinction between farmer and environmentalist, Peechatka

said, is that the "farmer looks at the environment as his farm, while the environmentalist looks at it all."

"The farmer can be sold on nutrient management if he understands the bottom line and the impact on the farm environment. There has to be a benefit (to the farmer) on those two issues," he said.

He suggested redesigned educational efforts to focus not on something as abstract to the average landowner as saving the bay, but rather to focus on the benefits on the farm of nutrient management.

And, referring to those who seek to save the overall environment, Peechatka said, "We have to educate ourselves as to what their goals and missions are."

Also, since "funds are going to very limited, we have to target high priority areas. The funds should be used for education and for installation of equipment."

Bruce Limpert, director of financial services with Wenger's Feed Mill, did provide specifics, but rather called on the industry to use the capitalistic and competitive spirit to combat unmanaged nutrients. He tempered that with saying that cooperation is also needed and can be done.

From a business point of view, he said that individuals within the industry need to identify where they are and where they are going to, especially since the farm population is down, the demand for farm products is up, and farm competition is up.

"We need to manage the margins," he said.

Also he called on the industry not to shun those seeking to create an atmosphere of environmentally responsible industry.

"Regulators and advocates must invite us in, and we must be willing to go in while it's early," he said, or else the industry will find itself working under impossible terms and suffering needlessly, all because of a failure to become involved in the democratic process.

In short, he said that if the farmers and industry do not get involved, they will little chance of modifying rules and regulations and of establishing reasonable and still profitable methods of dealing with a problem, whether it is nutrient management or not.

The other speakers addressed similar views and opinions.