

DENVER, Colo. — Sheep producers across the Northeast are speaking up in favor of an upcoming industry referendum. Growers in that region are voicing support for the continuation of producer education and the promotion of lamb and wool through checkoff dollars.

The referendum will ask sheep producers if they want to continue the national promotion programs, which are funded through a deduction from wool incentive payments. The program has been voted on and renewed nine times.

President and Director of New York State's Empire Sheep Producers Association John Bloomer, said, "I think sheep producers across the country are on the verge of being able to witness dramatic changes in the national lamb marketing structure. Adequate funding of the national organization is critical in reaching these goals and, for this reason, passage of the referendum is imperative."

Pennsylvania sheep producer Janet Mawhinney is also backing the referendum. She said, "Let's continue the trend of increasing lamb consumption. Support the

American Sheep Industry Association and vote yes on the referendum."

The wool incentive program currently deducts six cents per pound from wool incentive payments. Producers receive wool incentive payments, based on tariffs for imported wool, every year according to the amount of wool they produce.

In the referendum proposal, deductions for the 1991 marketing year could be up to seven cents per pound of wool. Sheep industry leaders could opt to increase deductions by one cent per year to a maximum increase of 11 cents deducted per pound of wool through the next four years. They could also choose to maintain the seven cent deduction level.

Phil Hobbie, a Hartland, Vt., grower, explains why he thinks deduction monies are important to Northeastern states. He said, "Producers in small farm-flock states, such as Vermont, use the SID program quite extensively. SID provides current information and new technologies first and that's a plus for sheep producers."

(Continued from Page A1) fast," said Gardner, a dairy farmer himself.

He said that Eastern, a Syracuse-based co-op with 3,100 member-farms in nine states, was pushing for legislative relief.

Gardner said he welcomed the action that several Northeast states have taken to raise the price for farmers through mandated cash premiums milk handlers and dealers must pay, but added that action on the federal level would have more far-reaching impact.

Because the floor price for raw milk is set by the government, Gardner said he was looking for Congressional action to raise that minimum price, or support price, for farmers. Having a more stable price, he said, would help do three things: (1) prevent wide swings in retail price and product availability; (2) keep more farmers in business, and (3) bolster the wounded rural economy.

The Walkers said they believed one other thing needed to be emphasized: No matter what price the farmer receives, it's important

to give the consumer a quality product.

"Quality starts here on the farm," said Shelley.

Chuck noted the cash bonuses that the co-op pays for quality "is an incentive", but that's not the reason we do it."

Said Shelley: "We'd do it anyways."

Even though they may get exceptional results, they do not regard their efforts as extra ordinary.

"We just keep things clean," Shelley said.

Said Chuck: "Keeping the cows clean and keeping the equipment clean."

Added Shelley: "I'm not stingy with soap."

The Walkers have been members of the cooperative the entire 17 years that they have been married, and Chuck was a member for several years before that.

Also helping on the farm are son Chad, 15, and daughter Sarah, 13. Sarah recently won recognition herself at the New York State Fair, taking first place in 4H and

5th in the open division with the sole Jersey cow in the Walker herd.

Besides the Walkers, who will receive dual honors as Farmers of the Year and top quality producers in New York, Eastern will recognize top producers in Vermont and Pennsylvania, as well as seven others, to round out a top ten list.

For the fourth consecutive year, Bruce E. Bartley Jr. of Cogan Station, Pa. takes honors as the top quality producer in Pennsylvania.

Daniel N. Pest of Richmond, Vt. is the top quality producer in Vermont.

The other top ten quality farmers are:

\* John & Gail Bunting, Treadwell, N.Y., the 1990 Farmers of the Year.

\* Aaron and Anna Mary Lapp, Loganton, Pa.

\* Phillip Reinhardt, Middletown, N.Y.

\* Marianne and Charles Rogers, Cogan Station, Pa.

\* Vollmans Dairy Farm, Trout Run, Pa.

\* Frank E. Welcher, Newark, N.Y.

\* Jeffrey and Karen Zuck, Myerstown, Pa.

The quality honorees were chosen after lab tests over a 12-month period showed that they had the best quality milk in the nine-state area in which the co-op operates.

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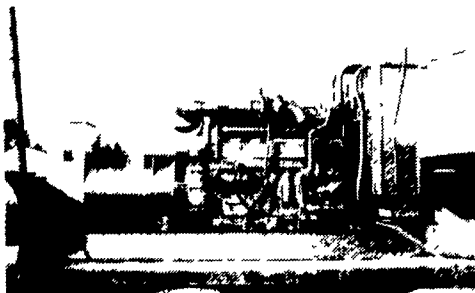
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