

Farm Group Keeps Watchful Eye On Animal Rights Activists

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ELIZABETHTOWN (Lancaster Co.) — A cartoon on the back of a recent animal welfare newsletter has a automobile driver careening off the road to avoid hitting a mouse — all the while heading straight for a human victim.

While this glowingly illustrates the lopsidedness in the views held by "animal rights" activists, it also points to the growing involvement of those groups that attack the use of animals for anything — food, scientific research, sports, etc.

But it is a concern that must weigh heavy on the minds of all those involved in large- and small-scale production agriculture. Many of the "animal rights" groups have huge numbers in their membership and are substantially funded. In the end, they could pose a threat to production agriculture on a wide scale.

Farmers who are concerned are invited to join a group called Pennsylvanians for the Responsible Use of Animals (PRUA), an advocacy group formed in 1982 comprised of many farm organizations that seeks to promote the responsible and humane use of animals for food, research, and entertainment.

Maintains headquarters

PRUA is headed by former state rep. Kenneth E. Brandt, of Falmouth, who maintains headquarters for PRUA in Lancaster County.

Many of the animal rights groups want to eliminate the use of animals for all food use and scientific research.

But most PRUA members advocate the responsible use of animals — not completely banning their use.

A special program to test educational materials at the grade and high school levels will be initiated statewide in the next five to six months, according to Dr. Lowell L. Wilson, professor of animal science in Penn State's College of Agriculture. The program involves faculty from the departments of

dairy and animal science, poultry sciences, agriculture and extension education, agricultural economics, rural sociology, and cooperative extension.

Examine material

The new program, funded by the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture, will examine, over a three-year span, effects of animal welfare material on students in school, as well as 4-H and FFA organizations throughout the state.

"We want to put forth a better image about the care and welfare of animals on farms," said Wilson. Wilson believes there needs to be more dialog between the farm and animal welfare groups.

Recently, Penn State released results from studies involving more than 1,000 veal calves. The studies show that "the majority of veal calves are healthy and well-treated," said Wilson.

Based on total blood protein levels, Wilson found that 88 percent of the calves had received colostrum. "All calves should have colostrum to give them early protection from diseases and to get them off to a better, healthier start," he said.

Producers under attack

Veal producers are under attack in particular from animal rights activists, mostly because the industry is "rather small and the least understood of all individual agricultural industries, including people who are involved in agriculture and those who are not," said Wilson.

There has been picketing of veal producer meetings on a regular basis, although this year, surprisingly, the number of such incidents are down, according to Wilson.

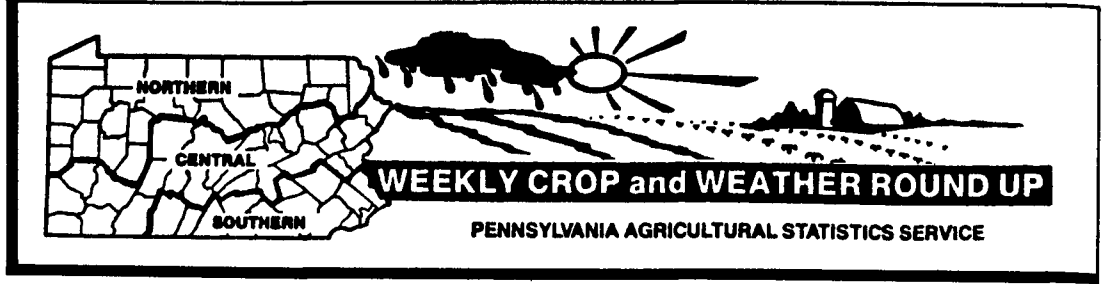
"There's not much you can do about the animal rights groups, because they hold a noncompromising philosophy," said Wilson. Accordingly, they do not show much interest in learning about other attitudes, and stick to their own opinions regardless of evidence.

To show their new concern for those who can benefit from the humane use of animals, PRUA

itself is sponsoring a program called "Sharing the Harvest." The program is aimed at using surplus

deer meat from this fall's deer harvest.

(Turn to Page A45)



FOR THE WEEK ENDING OCTOBER 13

GOOD WEEK FOR FIELDWORK: Below-normal temperatures and precipitation prevailed across the state. Precipitation occurred early and late in the week with dry conditions dominating during mid-week. Temperatures were coolest early and late in the week with the mid-week enjoying near normal temperatures. Respondents to our survey indicated that 5 days were suitable for fieldwork during the past week. Activities for the week included repairing fence; harvesting hay, fruit, potatoes, corn, corn silage, and soybeans; planting small grains; maintaining machinery; and caring for livestock.

CORN: At this time last year, the state's corn crop was rated 26 percent excellent, 48 percent good, 19 percent fair, 6 percent poor, and 1 percent very poor. By week's end, the corn crop was rated as being 0 percent in the dough stage, 16 percent in the dent stage, 54 percent in the mature stage, and 30 percent harvested. This compares to 1, 50, 43, and 6 percent respectively last year at this time. The five-year averages were 2, 32, 52, and 14 percent respectively. Corn harvest completion by region was 32 percent-northern, 29 percent-central, and 29 percent-southern. Corn silage harvest was 92 percent complete by week's end, compared to 52 percent at this time last year, and a 69 percent five-year average.

SOYBEANS: Pennsylvania soybean condition was rated 3 percent excellent, 28 percent good, 30 percent fair, 23 percent poor, and 16 percent very poor. Last year, soybeans were rated 20 percent excellent, 53 percent good, 22 percent fair, and 5 percent poor. Soybean harvest was 14 percent complete by week's end, 3 percent of the soybean crop was harvested by this time last year. The five-year average was 15 percent.

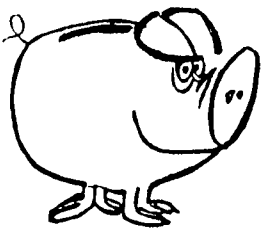
BARLEY AND WHEAT: Eighty-seven percent of the barley planting in the state was complete by week's end. Eighty-one percent of the barley had been planted at this time last year. The five-year average was 85 percent. Wheat planting was 74 percent complete. Sixty-one percent of the wheat had been planted by this time in 1990. The five-year average for wheat planting was 66 percent.

POTATOES: Potato harvest was 86 percent complete by week's end. A year ago, 76 percent of the state's potatoes had been harvested. The five-year average was 80 percent.

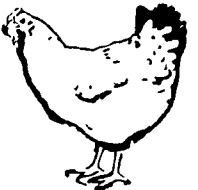
FALL PLOWING: Fall plowing across Pennsylvania was 72 percent complete by week's end. Last year at this time, 72 percent of fall plowing was complete. The five-year average for fall plowing completion was 76 percent.

FRUIT: Apple harvest by week's end was 73 percent complete. A year ago apple harvest was 71 percent complete. Eighty-seven percent of Pennsylvania's grapes were harvested by week's end. Last year at this time, 71 percent of the state's grapes had been harvested.

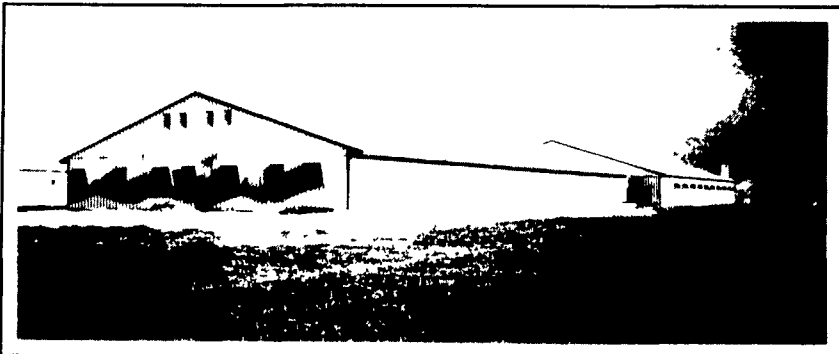
HAY AND PASTURE: Ninety-two percent of third cutting alfalfa was complete by week's end, compared to 85 percent in 1990. Fourth cutting alfalfa was 70 percent complete by the end of the week. Fifty-five percent had been cut by this time last year. The quality of hay made during the past week was rated 9 percent poor, 63 percent fair, and 28 percent good. The quality of feed being obtained from Pennsylvania's pastures was rated good by 4 percent, fair by 32 percent, poor by 31 percent, and very poor by 33 percent of our respondents.



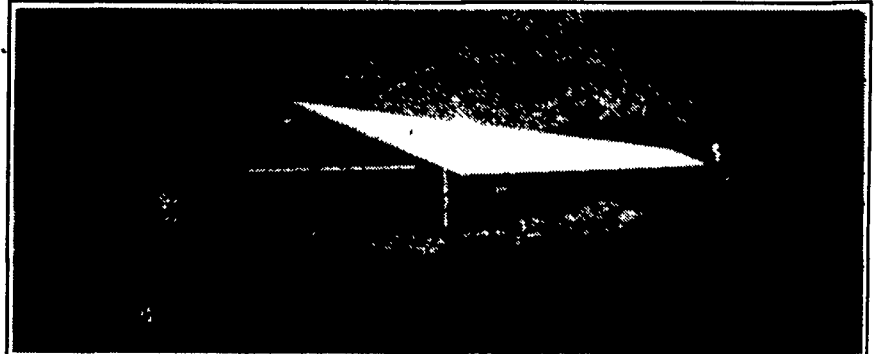
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