

# A History And Perspective Of The Pennsylvania DHIA Program

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listed production records. The Agent urged formation of cow testing associations and their numbers grew within each County, but each association was handled separately with their own board of directors and a supervisor. It is not clear when the first county-wide program began, but the last county did not name a county-wide board until April 1957. At that time PA DHIA stated it "would not recognize but one county organization with one county board of directors and one secretary-treasurer for purposes of collecting fees owed to State DHIA".

Bull rings were popular prior to artificial insemination and depended on production records for bull evaluation. Agents were advisors to members of the bull ring. In most instances the same progressive dairymen were involved with both the bull ring and cow testing and the programs complimented each other.

Agents were constantly scouting for potential Supervisors. They often took the person to Penn State for training in the DHIA shortcourse. Agents sent out notices calling the Directors together for a monthly meeting, usually held in the Agent's office with the minutes taken by his office secretary. In most cases the Extension secretary was secretary to each cow testing association, and later for the county-wide program. She typed, prepared, and sent the monthly report and the year end summary report. Even following the advent of computer summary of records in 1958, a certain amount of fine-tuning of county records was done by the Extension office to prepare for the annual DHIA meetings. All the costs of secretary time, paper, mimeo supplies, and postage were absorbed by the local Extension office. The dairymen reasoned that it was their tax dollar that helped fund the office. That was true in most but not all counties.

The County Agent was of greater value to DHIA at the county level than was the Specialist overseeing DHIA. They were the glue that held the program together. For years the dairyman in the local association least able to defend himself became a DHIA direc-

tor. That may be true in some instances today. It took some arm twisting by the Agent to keep a full board of directors.

Early Extension Dairy Specialists Roscoe Welsh and E. B. Fitts advocated the dairy record programs, but left the organizing and consulting leadership in the hands of the County Agent. In 1921 Sidelmann began the summary work, and in 1923 Gearhart became the specialist in charge of cow testing programs. Gearhart worked closely with the agent to increase the accuracy and reliability of records, train supervisors, enforce rules and regulations, use records to build educational programs, increase numbers of cows and herds on test, build leadership, and strengthen boards of directors. It was not an easy task. He managed DHIA by suggestion, much the same as Extension has done since he retired. Extension has never controlled DHIA, even in the beginning. Local directors did as they pleased as long as no testing rules were broken. When rules were broken it was the responsibility of the local board to take appropriate action. All Extension could do was to call attention to the problem. Supervisors were trained and approved by Gearhart, and later by Herb Gilmore, but they could not hire or fire a Supervisor. As long as the local directors would accept the quality of work the Supervisor was their employee. Problems with a dairyman or a supervisor usually could be settled to everyone's satisfaction via discussion. To say that Extension could or ever did control DHIA is a gross misstatement, and an affront to the dairy leadership involved with DHIA.

DHIA looked more and more to Penn State as the hub of organizational efforts. Perhaps this is natural since the State Specialists at Penn State held the state together much as the Agent held the county together. To reduce travel and time away from the farm, five districts were formed in the state. County associations sent directors to these meetings, held in the spring and fall each year. The business of establishing and enforcing uniform rules, testing procedures, wages, Workmans Compensation, liability, and Social Security, etc., was

accomplished district by district. The State Specialist usually planned the meeting agenda based on the urgent problems of the area and the availability of new information.

As central processing and central testing was considered Penn State became more critical as the hub of operations. The State Board of Directors was formed in 1954 and all meetings were held in State College. Until recent years the Autoport Restaurant was the meeting site. Gilmore and Dexter Putnam were in effect the "managers" that DHIA could ill afford or choose to not hire. Penn State offered building space, equipment, and supplies that DHIA could not afford to purchase or rent. Even when DHIA had the treasury to do so, Penn State continued to offer the harbor that was more cost effective than starting a program off campus, and that continues to be the case in 1991.

Cooperative Extension has always had the philosophy that a program or idea should be offered to the farming public and help them to prosper. If the program required farm leadership then Extension developed that leadership, and as soon as feasible the program was turned over to the leadership to manage.

DHIA is different than most Extension sponsored programs. It crosses many lines of expertise and is used to measure progress in a multitude of disciplines. The dairyman uses the production record to cull an unprofitable cow, prove a sire, evaluate a new feeding program, or change a management practice. When Agronomy began intensive nitrogen fertilization to increase corn and grass yields, tonnage of dry matter was an early measure of success, but the final measure was its effect on milk production and the fat test. When Entomology evaluated the practical value of fly control on milk cows, the end result was measured in pounds of milk produced. When Agricultural Engineering measured the value of barn ventilation or housing conditions they determined its effect on cow comfort and health by noting changes in milk production. Extension

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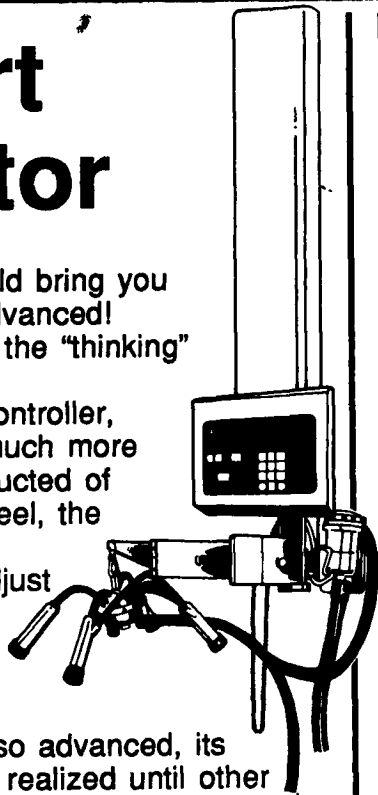
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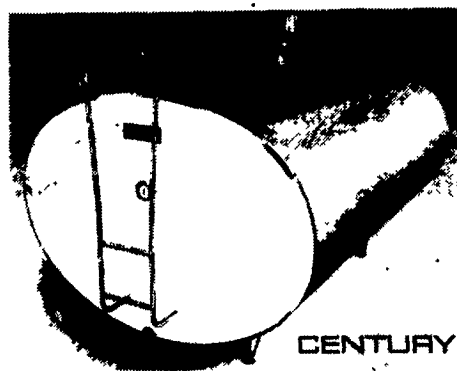


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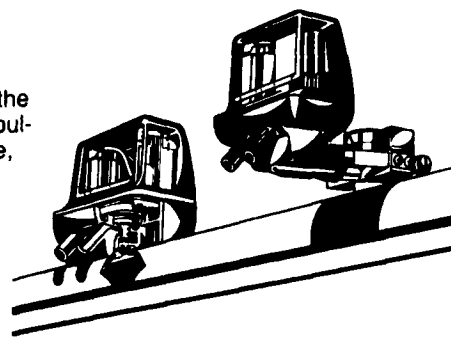
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