

Burned Barns Rebuilt

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reality — 139 cattle, 38 horses and countless smaller animals had burned in the flames.

While shock of the tragedy reverberated nationwide and even further, the anger smoldered at home.

Aftershock

When the smoke cleared, questions rose to fill the air — why the Amish, who did this and will they strike again? With this last added fear, sparked by rumors of threats of more fires the upcoming weekend, Mifflin Countians prepared to protect themselves. Some bought dusk-to-dawn lights, some kept stable lights on all night, some kept vigil in the barn, while others patrolled the roads. But with suspects under watchful consideration and a heavy snow blanketing most farm lanes, the county sighed with relief as the following weekend passed without any reported incident.

Battling the Blazes

The evening of the 14th proved

to be a firefighter's nightmare. The Belleville Fire Company fought the first barn fire but noticed smoke coming from the neighboring barn. Crews from nearby towns prepared to assist with the first fire but were soon called out to the other fires. Within 90 minutes, 24 fire companies from 4 counties responded to six barn blazes and other attempted fires. Cement trucks from Juniata Concrete hauled water while Snedeker & K.V. Oil companies supplied fuel for the emergency vehicles. The Salvation Army supplied food.

Cleaning Up

By Monday morning, clean-up began and, because of the incredible response, volunteers cleared most of the damage and had dug footers on three of the farms. More than 300 volunteers, many from the Mennonite Disaster Service, helped. Donations to the "Big Valley Barn Fire Relief" Fund, started at the Kishacoquillas Valley Bank, will go towards pur-



This is one of the farm lanes traveled by arsonists to burn the barn on the farm in the background. The FBI is investigating to see if Amish civil rights have been violated.

chasing building materials.

Estimates to replace each barn are set at \$50,000 with all-volunteer labor, not including livestock, machinery or equip-

ment. As of April 1, the fund at Kish Bank totaled over \$400,000 and is closing in on the half a million dollar mark.

The tremendous response from the community, state, and even nation has been incredible, almost overwhelming to the Amish.

Churches donated Sunday morning offerings; restaurants gave food; and pick-up trucks brought in loads of potatoes. The Mifflin County Extension Office is accepting donations of hay, livestock and equipment. Ag businesses, seed and fertilizer companies are replacing lost supplies needed for spring planting.

One pony at Keisters Middleburg Livestock Auction was auctioned off 63 times for a total cash donation of \$5,797. Fund-raisers include talent shows, chicken barbeques, and street fairs.

Even the children responded. A "horse" fund for students at the Armagh, Brown and Union Elementary schools and the Indian Valley Middle School, exceeded its goal of \$900 — enough to buy one horse for neighbor Isaac Yoder whose farm they pass every morning on the way to school. Instead, they raised over \$4,000 — enough to buy a team of horses.

FBI

Because the victims hold similar religious beliefs and adhere to similar lifestyles, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) is investigating the possible "hate" motive.

Additional charges can be brought against the suspect(s) for a violation of Civil Rights statutes if the Amish were targeted.

Until then, the rebuilding and healing must go on.

Penn State Resolves Ag Land Issue

VERNON ACHENBACH JR.

Lancaster Farming Staff
UNIVERSITY PARK (Centre Co.) — The beef is still at Penn State University.

Cutbacks in state and federal support to Pennsylvania State University and efforts to increase the efficiency of research work within the university's College of Agricultural Sciences resulted in dispersals last spring and summer of some dairy and sheep breeds from the college facilities.

University expansion plans caused concern among beef cattle producers that the expansion would rob pasture from the PSU beef cattle program and force additional dispersals.

But such is not necessarily the case.

Dr. Erksine Cash, a professor with the Department of Dairy and Animal Sciences, within the College of Ag Sciences, said that the beef cattle research has not been threatened and that a deal has been worked out between the different interests within the university that has left the cattle program intact, if not better off.

At issue was the loss of 93 acres of pasture.

It is true that the department lost those acres of pasture, according to Cash, but they were able to retain a third of that and received compensatory funds which are targeted for investment to make the reduced acreage at least as usable as the previous 90 acres.

From a historical perspective, numerous interests have sought Penn State land, a federal land

grant institution, for purposes other than agricultural research.

Over the years, land has been taken out of agricultural use for a variety of reasons — buildings, sports fields, housing, the Rt. 322 bypass to allow better flow of traffic to the Penn State home games; hospital construction, etc.

The more recent demands for land has caused concern among some beef cattle breed organizations.

The 90 acres have been targeted for use in a hospital expansion and for construction of a research center at the University Park campus.

However, the action will not cause a problem, according to Cash.

"The land issue has been resolved. The university, the college and the department are putting up the money for the department," said Dr. Cash.

He said that what is planned is a slight downsizing of the research herds and the installment of fencing and watering systems so that more intensive pasture use can be done.

Cash said that those concerned with the beef cattle research at Penn State should not be — it will not be affected.

"The college was able to free up 30 acres of land and the research park initial phase is taking 92 acres out of production, but by going to a more intensive system and doing a better job with what we have, we think we will be all right," Cash said.

The compromise provides for



On a cool day, the sky threatening to rain, volunteers work on the six Mifflin County Amish barns destroyed in one night by an arsonist.

Coming to help with tools in hand, the Mennonite Disaster Service from Lancaster provided invaluable help. Mostly coming up daily by van loads, a bus brought volunteers this day, dropping a few off at each work site.

With the rafters going up, the roofing crews were scheduled to do their part the following day. One barn was completed two weeks after the fire, and the other five barns will soon be finished.