

Lancaster Farming

VOL. 37 No. 26

Four Sections

Lancaster Farming, Saturday, May 9, 1992

60¢ Per Copy

19.00 Per Year

Senate Ag Committee Hears More On Nutrient Management

VERNON ACHENBACH JR.
Lancaster Farming Staff
HARRISBURG (Dauphin Co.) — The Senate Agriculture and Rural Affairs Committee heard additional testimony — emotional and scientific — on nutrient management Wednesday during a special hearing in the Capitol Building.

The purpose of the meeting was to provide another forum for committee members to learn more about what has become somewhat of a controversial issue, before putting any proposals out before the full Senate.

Most testimony was as expected, especially opposition

statements on H.B. 496 by a group of more than 100 Amishmen from several different counties in Pennsylvania as presented by Lancaster farmer-Amish spokesman Allen Weicksel.

His comments, on behalf of the Amish and some other non-Amish who are joined in a group called the Family Farm Movement, repeated statements printed and made previously through newspaper articles or during meetings.

Basically, their requests focus on consideration of no bill, and then if a bill, one that denies full regulatory and enforcement by the state Department of Environmental Resources (DER).

What they seek is to be left alone with guidelines, and, if regulated, to have enforcement carried out by officers for the state Department of Agriculture, which is viewed as a sympathetic-to-farmers bureau.

Weicksel also presented to the committee a simple mathematical comparison between the amount of

nitrogen that crops in the Susquehanna River watershed need in order to produce a profitable crop and the amount of nitrogen applied, not including that within the soil.

The result of the comparison, according to Weicksel, was that not enough nitrogen is spread on crop

fields within the watershed to ensure a profitable harvest.

The comparison was performed by two Lancaster County extension agents.

But the most dramatic news presented was by both Sen. Edward Helfrick, chairman of the committee.

(Turn to Page A35)

Legislator Proposes Tougher Animal Disease Laws

VERNON ACHENBACH JR.
Lancaster Farming Staff
HARRISBURG (Dauphin Co.) — In an attempt to toughen Pennsylvania's ability to control contagious animal diseases, a Bucks County representative is planning to propose changes to two existing laws within the next 10 days.

If enacted, the legislation would give the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture (PDA) the authority to test and condemn deer and other non-traditional farm animals and all captive animals.

It would also establish a condemnation and compensation program for those wild or semi-

wild animals held in captivity.

Rep. Paul Clymer, sponsor of the bill, said, "The people who had contacted me, the vets who have seen the problem, feel as helpless as anyone when nothing can be done (to control disease in non-traditional farm animals or pets).

"It's just sound preventative maintenance for animals, whether farm animals or captive animals," he said, "and it makes a lot of sense. It will help Pennsylvania agriculture in the broad spectrum.

"It's something that should have been looked at for a long time," he said.

"We have to take preventative

(Turn to Page A23)

Farm Lane Paving Scam Reported In Lancaster

EVERETT NEWSWANGER
Managing Editor

LITITZ (Lancaster Co.)—A warning was issued from a local bank official this week to the effect that a firm with questionable practices for paving farm lanes was operating in Lancaster County. At least three Amish farmers were forced to pull \$5,000 or more in cash out of their accounts in local banks to pay for paving from a company that has no address on their business card.

From an on-the-farm visit with an Amish farm family, the story they tell is typical of what has been reported from other farmers.

A truck loaded with oil and stone materials pulled into the farm, and the occupants said they had some material left over from a job and needed to get rid of the rest of the load somewhere. Since the farmer had some pot holes in a farm lane, and the price at 80 cents per foot seemed to be reasonable, he agreed to allow the men to dump the remainder of the load on the lane to cover the holes.

But the remainder of the load was large enough that "it never got all," the Amish farmer said. And the total bill was figured at 80 cents per square foot, not per running foot.

Because the bill was so large, the farmer insisted that payment wait for three days until he received the milk check. But rather than wait, the pavers reduced the price from 80 cents to 55 cents and continued to hassle the farm family until they went to the bank and borrowed the money and paid off the debt with 50 \$100 bills.

Farmers need to be sure of the reputation of any company that comes to the farm to do business. On jobs as large as paving a lane, reputable companies will come to the farm and give estimates what the job will cost, including a final total of all charges.

These estimates will also include the written terms of payment required, plant location and references to check on the reputation of the company.

Don't be taken by a deal that seems to be too good to be true. It probably is.



Tomato growers Dale Frank and Steve Hershey brought out the three-row transplanter this week to begin the tomato season. Driving the tractor is Hershey. In back, inserting the plugs, are, from left, John Huggins, Dave Strychalski, and Ken Huggins. Photo by Andy Andrews.

Growers Believe Proper Timing Helps Ensure Bountiful Tomato Harvest

ANDY ANDREWS
Lancaster Farming Staff
ELIZABETHTOWN (Lancaster Co.) — "Ninety percent of making a profit in tomatoes, corn, or whatever is timing. If you can't get the work done on time and in the correct fashion, you aren't going to make it," said Dale Frank.

Frank, who grows tomatoes under partnership with Steve Hershey, believes that weather conditions, healthy transplants, and management command a farmer's attention from planting all the way through harvest season.

Both farmers were challenged with their beliefs the past summer, which saw record-breaking temperatures (the year in the county tied for the warmest ever) and a drought which devastated crops throughout the state.

And even though both were honored for their work by the State Champion Tomato Growers' Club at the Vegetable Conference earlier this year in Hershey (Class 1, machine harvest, 60 or more acres), the tomato growers believe profits are more important than awards.

1,500 tons
of fruit

Last year, Hershey and Frank harvested 1,500 tons of usable fruit on 60 acres for an average yield of

25 tons per acre. The acreage was divided evenly between Hershey, a dairy farmer, and Frank, who raises beef cattle. According to reports furnished at the conference by the Pennsylvania Tomato Processors, varieties grown were Ohio 8245, Peto 2196, LaRossa, Peto 696, Early Pear, and Ohio 7983.

Locally grown stock was transplanted from May 1 through May 20 at 10,000 plants per acre. The plants were spaced in five feet rows at 10 inches apart.

Hershey and Frank use a three-

row pull-behind carousel plug planter. At planting time, they use a starter fertilizer high in phosphorous.

Last year, the growers wetted down the plants with a hose before mounting them on the transplanter trays. This year, however, the growers (who have expanded tomato production to 70 acres) plan to immerse the plants in water, soaking the roots before setting them in the soil.

(Turn to Page A26)



Grange Master William Ringler presents a recognition award to Melinda Tercha, national 1991 Female Agriculturist, during the annual Grange Legislative Banquet. See Grange story page A20.