

PFA Pushes For Deer Permits

CAMP HILL (Cumberland Co.) — Citing intolerable deer damage and insufficient action by the Game Commission, the Pennsylvania Farmers' Association (PFA) is seeking help from the General Assembly.

In testimony Thursday before the House Republican Policy Committee Task Force on Deer Damage, PFA spokesman Leonard Crooke called for legislation to let farmers bring in hunters during the growing season to help eliminate deer causing crop damage.

Crooke, a Bucks County dairyman and a member of PFA's Wildlife Damage Control Committee, spoke at a field hearing of the task force in Stockertown, Northampton County.

PFA supports a "deer damage permit plan" that would allow farmers with crop damage to bring in one hunter for every 25 acres of farmland to harvest deer causing damage from August 1 until deer season begins.

While there are no recent studies of deer damage to farm crops, Crooke said, "The most recent sta-

tistical information dates back to 1981 when a Pennsylvania State University study indicated the annual economic impact due to deer damage in Pennsylvania was somewhere between \$16 million and \$30 million. Since that time, estimates of damage have been much higher."

Surveys conducted by PFA in 1988 and 1990, "indicate that 38 percent of Pennsylvania farms have intolerable levels of damage," Crooke said. A separate survey indicated the damage rate on affected farms averaged \$4,000 per farm, Crooke added.

Over the years, PFA has asked the Game Commission to take steps to reduce the size of the deer herd and develop new programs to help individual farmers with severe problems.

"Attempts by the Game Commission to reduce the size of the deer herd have only this year begun to show some sign of success," Crooke testified. "Commission statistics, however, still show that most counties are over the recommended population level.

Statewide, the antlerless deer population still remains at more than 100,000 over the recommended level."

Furthermore, PFA said, Game Commission attempts to implement programs to aid individual farmers have also been unsuccessful.

"The general response by the Game Commission has been to indicate that the current law which allows farmers to destroy deer for crop damage is sufficient," Crooke said. "The Pennsylvania Farmers' Association disagrees with this, due to both the amount of time required, and the public pressure which is placed on farmers attempting to comply with the law."

A farm workload, which can include 18 hours of physical labor, "is especially great during times when deer are doing the most damage," Crooke said, "We cannot take time away from the few hours of sleep we do get to be

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and is heading for college next fall.

Asked what will happen to the 240 year-old-farm if none of the children want to work the land and operate the dairy, Jim simply shrugs his shoulders to indicate that he doesn't know. Yet, he isn't given to worrying about the

possibility. What troubles Jim is the difficulty farmers meet when seeking good hired help. "It's almost impossible to find good farm help," he said. "I just wish we could pay the going rate of pay like the steel mills and other big businesses. Farming is big business, but we ought to be able to make an equal wage."

Brewer says that Wilczak and Flaga, who were traveling separately, were selected to tour Pennsylvania because of its similarity to their home area. Also considered prior to their coming here was the need for greater knowledge for Polish farmers and improving the sales market for them.

He said, too, that following the visit he and Moore made to Poland last year, Jay and Betty Irwin of Lancaster County and George Greaser of Blair County spent six months in Poland acquiring needed information about the agriculture practices there.

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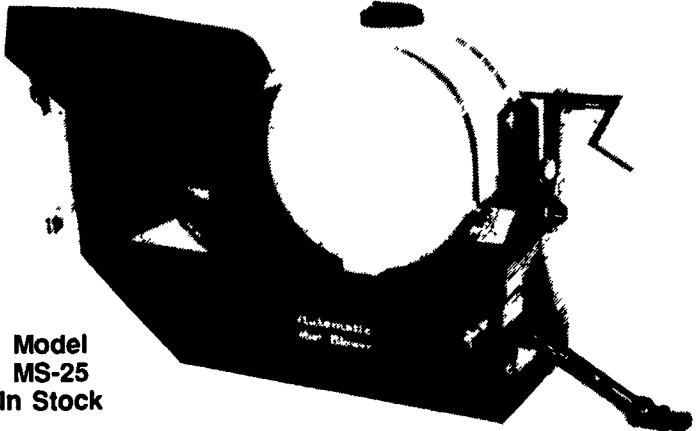
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