

Lancaster Members

(Continued from Page A1) happening in their bid to move processing to Raleigh and lab services to Maryland.

Principal spokesmen included John Howard, committee chairman; Bob Wenger, Lancaster president, Ken Butcher, director, Dairy Records Processing Center, Raleigh, N.C., and Glenn Shirk, county agent. About 100 farmers attended.

In summary, as reported at the meeting, the Lancaster board and the Pennsylvania board have agreed to a 10-point proposal, fashioned by National DHIA, that says PaDHIA will release Lancaster's herds to Raleigh "without the current contingencies based on execution of a long-term agreement."

And Lancaster DHIA agrees to not pursue its move of lab services to Maryland until National DHIA has another annual meeting in March to bring national bylaws and policies into harmony.

The agreement is for six months. During the agreement, a working group from the local, state and

national associations will, among other things, oversee certification fee pricing. In addition, the bylaw change issue will be placed on the four caucus agendas that precede the national DHIA convention.

In his opening statement, Howard summarized the events that led to the present agreement. Quoting from a published report that said under current policy of National DHIA, members have the freedom to choose where their services come from, Howard said the local board thought it was doing what the rules allowed.

"Of the 57 DHIA's in the nation, Lancaster County is the 17th largest," Howard said. "The six states ahead of us have less than 10,000 more cows. If we could pick up 10,000 cows on test, we would be the 11th largest. And we are only a county organization."

"Some other DHIA's need to go across their state to get the number of cows we have. This gives us tremendous advantage in running our field service. We don't need to

travel many miles in our concentrated dairy area. Consequently, our supervisors test two to three times more cows per person than in most states. This keeps our overhead down.

"We can contract for processing and lab service from large organizations to give us access to the best technology at competitive cost. With lower overhead, this gives us the ability to be one of the best. Being independent will give us the ability to set our rates and programs especially for owner sampler herds. We want to keep as many people on test as we can."

"Because of our size and close proximity to supervisors, the hiring, training and supervisor conferences can be done with very little expense. The entire cost to run the county is about three cents per cow," Howard said.

"When you have competition, the service gets better and the prices go down," Wenger said. "That's the trend, and national agrees that's the trend. But the question remains how do we go to Maryland and not be in violation of

national bylaws. With this six month agreement, we will stay with Pennsylvania for lab service and field certification and keep ourselves within the national bylaws."

Butcher said 83 percent of Raleigh's cows are on their electronic data transfer systems. "As we look at the future record processing, we can see that computing will move away from centralized locations to more local associations. A lot of computing and processing will be done closer to the farm, and only the necessary information transferred to a central location and on to USDA, etc."

Raleigh is a cooperative with an advisory board that includes one member from each of the 16 states in the association. Lancaster will become the 17th. According to Butcher, they have not had a rate increase since 1985, and since that time have given more than \$100,000 in a lump rebate to members on two different occasions. Meanwhile, they have built

reserves of \$350,000 to be used against new computing equipment when needed.

If things go as proposed, the Lancaster supervisors will have the pertinent information that has been transferred from Pennsylvania to Raleigh when they arrive on the farm for the October test. When the test is complete and records processed, the dairy farmer will receive the first reports from Raleigh. According to the 10 point agreement, Lancaster will permit DRPC choice for their members, and Pennsylvania will not compete in the county.

"DHIA is at a crossroads, and many important decisions must be made," Shirk said. "The dairy industry is also in a state of change, and DHIA must meet those changes and challenges of the industry. I think that's what your board struggles with as they try to meet your interests to make sure you get the kind of records and service you need to be current, effective as managers, and competitive with dairymen across the country."

"Your board has worked long and hard the past year, volunteered in your behalf to wrestle with these decisions. They are to be commended. They have taken the leadership nationwide to challenge decisions or lack of decisions and policies that need to be put in place.

"They have your support, as witnessed by the more than 1,000 requests for transfer. That's solidarity, that's unity, numbers, and power that catches people's attention.

"You need freedom of choice. As an extension agent, I will support either choice you make. I'll give them both my full support. You have a big decision to make. I hope you think about it very carefully, talk to your directors, make up your mind," Shirk said. "You will get my support if you go south or if you stay with Pennsylvania."

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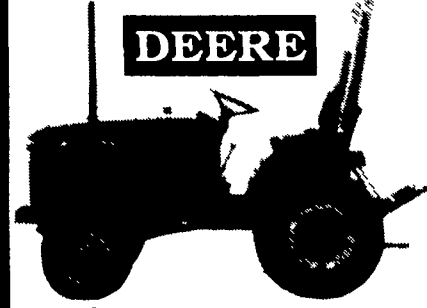
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