

'Researcher Is American Hero' Director Tells PRUA

ELIZABETHTOWN (Lancaster Co.) — "We want to make the American researcher the American hero," Susan Paris told the board of directors of Pennsylvanians for the Responsible Use of Animals (PRUA) at its regular meeting.

PRUA is a federation of Pennsylvania organizations and individuals who encourage humane treatment of animals, while believing it is good for humankind to use animals for food, clothing, biomedical research, entertainment, and sport.

Paris, executive director for Americans for Medical Progress, explained that the group believes that "research is good for all of us" and is working aggressively to take that message to the American public. "We want to promote and protect biomedical research." She said that most people are not aware of the value and necessity of animal research in bringing cures to the public.

Americans for Medical Progress is organized as a trade association with the ability to lobby for effective legislation. It is also an

educational foundation and a charitable organization for tax deductible contributions. Headquartered in Arlington, the organization is working primarily to influence public policy and increase public awareness of the contributions made by biomedical research to finding cures for a variety of deadly diseases.

In addition to influencing public opinion and working to ensure the future of research, the group wants to recognize the value of the researcher. They have developed a "medical progress prize" which

will call attention to a researcher who has been selected by 500 people in the field. The award will be presented at a prominent dinner in New York, featuring former president Gerald Ford and Mary Fisher, an AIDS victim who spoke at the National Republican convention.

The organization has launched a hard-hitting print advertising campaign designed to show specific benefits of biomedical research. There are also television spots, both public service announcements and membership commercials, all geared to spread the message of promoting and protecting research. A half-hour documentary has been produced to tell the research story.

The trade association is six months old, but has attracted national attention and wants to become involved at all levels throughout the country, to become truly broad-based. The educational foundation already has 1,000 grassroots members and will be launching chapters of Students for Medical Progress on 200 college campuses throughout the country. Paris said her organization will be providing organizational support, political support, and speakers' bureaus for the campus organization in an effort to raise awareness.

A newsletter called "Breakthrough" is designed to make public the latest treatments, medical cures, and continuing research on diseases and the animals which help make these successes possible. There are also brochures detailing ongoing research efforts, explaining that if animals could not be used many cures would not have been possible.

In bringing the message of

Americans for Medical Progress to the PRUA board, Paris said, "Our goal is to promote and protect biomedical research."

Louis Sallie, administrative secretary for Pennsylvania Farmers Association, welcomed the PRUA board to PFA headquarters and stressed the importance of working together to combat the negative image portrayed by those in the animal rights movement. Sallie said, "It is to the benefit of agriculture for us to strive to tell the facts about the use of animals in agriculture and biomedical research."

PRUA Executive Vice President Kenneth Brandt said, "We in agriculture have a responsibility to work together to promote a better understanding of the role of animals — both in agriculture and in biomedical research. We must tell the public the story of the importance of animals."

In other business Brandt told the board that the "Hunters Sharing the Harvest" project is being widely supported and implemented this hunting season. Through the program, hunters may donate part of their venison to help feed the hungry through food banks, soup kitchens, and other groups who provide food for needy people. It is a cooperative effort by hunters, PRUA, Pennsylvania Association of Meat Packers, Pennsylvania's Food Banks, and the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture, with Uni-Marts serving as sponsors this year.

Last year Pennsylvania's hunters donated 30,000 pounds of venison, and PRUA hopes to have 100,000 pounds donated this year.

For more information, contact PRUA, P.O. Box 61, Elizabethtown, PA 17022.

Beware Of Dust, Gas Problems In Buildings

UNIVERSITY PARK (Centre Co.) — As the days get shorter, farmers are harvesting in earnest to meet nature's deadlines. But changing weather can create hazards on the farm, said a safety specialist in Penn State's College of Agricultural Sciences.

"As winter approaches, farm buildings will need to be tightly closed to protect farm animals from the cold," said Sam Steel, extension project associate in agricultural and biological engineering and program director for the Pennsylvania Agricultural Safety Council.

"But closing farm buildings tightly also can reduce the air quality by limiting air circulation," said Steel. "Dust and fume levels may rise significantly, which can place farmers and farm workers at risk for respiratory illness."

Steel says that recent research has shown that more than 50 percent of swine confinement workers in the United States had symptoms of chronic bronchitis, including excessive coughing and chest congestion.

"Health specialists also are

blaming organic dust toxic syndrome, or ODTD, for a farm-related respiratory illness that has flu-like symptoms such as fever, headache, and muscular aches and pains," said Steel.

A less common illness that can afflict farm workers is Farmer's Lung. "This allergic reaction is caused by inhaling dust from moldy hay, grain or straw," Steel said. "This illness can be very serious, since it can cause permanent lung damage."

Toxic gases also may be present in poorly ventilated buildings. "Among these are gases associated with manure storage pits, especially those located immediately beneath livestock containment buildings," said Steel. "These dangerous gases generally become a problem during manure agitation."

"These gases include hydrogen sulfide, which has a rotten egg smell at low concentrations and is extremely lethal at higher concentrations," he said. "Ammonia has a very offensive odor that usually causes workers to leave the area. Methane is a very explosive gas at higher concentrations, and

carbon dioxide cuts the oxygen in the air.

"Even low levels of hydrogen sulfide and ammonia will produce eye and lung irritations, headaches, drowsiness, and dizziness."

Steel strongly urges all farmers and farm workers to use personal protective equipment when working in dusty buildings or around potentially hazardous gases.

"Respirators approved by the National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health should be used in dusty environments," he said. "People who have to enter manure pits during maintenance, repair, or rescue operations must wear self-contained breathing apparatus or SCBAs."

More information on respiratory protection from dusts and hazardous gases is available from the Pennsylvania Agricultural Safety Council, P.O. Box 997, State College, PA 16801, (814) 863-7710.

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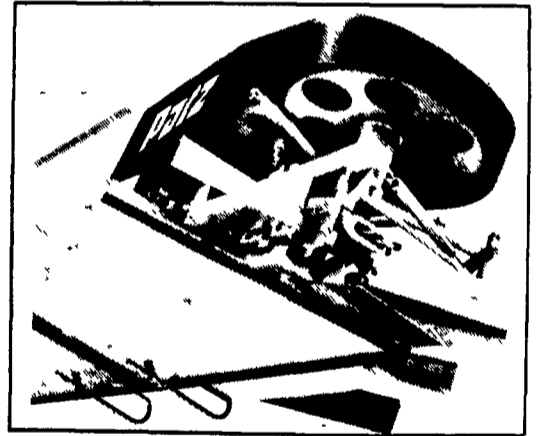
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