CORN TALK NEWS
PENNSYLVANIA MASTER CORN GROWERS ASSOC., INC.

Prize For High Corn Yield May Bode Future Success

On a frigid winter day, Larry Moyer, right, and Tuff Wilson pause outside the farrowing house on Brookvue Farms in Mertztown.

CONNIE LEINBACH
Berks Co. Correspondent

MERTZTOWN (Berks Co.) — Larry Moyer may not have farming in his blood, but this recently turned livestock and corn farmer found he has a knack for it.

Moyer recently won top honors in the Pa. Corn Grower's Association regular category. Moyer topped the competition with 214 bushels per acre in the five-acre contest. It was the second time he'd entered the contest.

An insurance agent and financial planner for the last 28 years, Moyer also took up farming when he married his wife, the former Linda Gillespie, four years ago and moved to her family's farm. He and farm manager Marion "Tuff" Wilson chuckle as they recall how they didn't expect to win any awards in the contest, let alone top.

"We knew we had good yields," Moyer said. "But we didn't know we had that much."

Wilson explained that when the Doebler representative heard they were planning to enter the contest, the agent suggested they try a new variety on the five-acre plot — 73XP. So they did.

Because of the wet season, they didn't harvest the crop until two days before the contest deadline. The last day they harvested was Dec. 30, Wilson said.

It took that long for the moisture content to go down.

"Last year, 19 percent was the wettest corn I had," Wilson said. "This year, that was the driest." Moisture levels this year, he said, ranged from 19 percent to 24 percent.

Moyer ruminated on the irony of it all. He's doing a good job following his father-in-law's footsteps, although he never knew the man.

His father-in-law, the late William Gillespie, in 1972 won the same award with Pioneer 3369A. Gillespie, who was principally a beef and corn farmer, was named Pennsylvania Livestock Man of the Year in 1985. As such, his picture hangs in the Farm Show Complex. All this was done during Gillespie's retirement after a career in New Jersey as territorial manager for Beacon Feeds.

Gillespie always wanted to get back into farming, and he spent 10 to 12 years searching several states for the ideal farm, Moyer said.

He found it outside of Mertztown on a piece of land tucked into the far northeast corner of Berks County, extending into Lehigh County.

He named the 250-acre site, complete with a stream coursing through it, Brookvue Farms. Gillespie could tell just by looking at the soil that this was his dream spot.

"We're very fortunate to have fine soil here," Moyer said. "It's called Washington soil, or Virginia loam. It may be the finest soil in the Lehigh Valley."

It's high in potash and phosphate, Wilson said.

So for his second career, Gillespie became a farmer, raising cattle and corn, adding hogs 20 years ago. He hired Wilson, a hog expert who had worked for the former A & B Meats, as manager eight years ago.

The hog operation is proving to be so successful that Moyer is looking to expand his production fivefold.

"Last year we doubled production," he said. "Next year we will triple it."

Now, however, he can't fully utilize his sows because of the limited space in his farrowing house. A new farrowing house and grower-finisher building scheduled to be built this spring will relieve congestion.

"We're working in less than ideal conditions here," he said.

Ideal conditions developed after the building are complete will complement his already successful attempts at finishing his hogs sooner.

Moyer stumbled upon a new type of hog feeder, called an Ad-Lib Feeder, developed in Scotland. Its principal is simple: Pigs are separated from each other, minimizing aggression, and the feed is contained within each pig's space, significantly reducing waste.

The trough of the feeders are made of polymer concrete, which is virtually impervious to corrosion from saliva, water, and other farm-related acids.

Moyer said he installed the feeders for his 525 head of hogs in August and already he has obtained an increase in average weight gain for each pig.

"We did nothing different except put in these feeders," he said "They're getting to market earlier and at heavier weights."

Moyer and Wilson were so impressed that Wilson suggested Moyer sell the feeders here. That's how he became the distributor for the United States. Now he travels around the country to state pork conventions where he shows the feeders.

His wife Linda is happy to be living on the farm her father bought while she was in college.

"I'm sure he'd be thrilled to know how things are going," she said about her father.

Moyer smiles as he considers the path his life has taken.

"I never lived on a farm," he said, "But I'm fascinated by farming."

He notes that Wilson is a chief source of expertise and that he and Wilson make a good team.

"He's a terrific asset," Moyer said. "I wouldn't be able to do this without him."

Extent, Quality Unknown For Unharvested Corn

VERN ACHENBACH JR.
Lancaster Farming Staff

STATE COLLEGE (Centre Co.) — The consensus of opinion is that a significant amount of the 1992 corn crop went unharvested and, of that which was taken in, mold-related problems may be widespread.

Much information has been forthcoming in the past two months on the advisability of feeding moldy feeds or harvesting fields of still-standing corn for use as feed.

Existing agricultural data collection services and agencies do not have procedures in place for making a determination of the amount of corn still standing.

Kim Neilsen, an agricultural statistician with the Pennsylvania Agricultural Statistics Service (PASS), reviews the official surveys and compiles the PASS field crops and crop weather report.

He said PASS does not have an accurate tool in place to measure the amount of corn still in the field. Their survey asks farmers what percentage of their expected crop has been harvested.

He said that if the corn has been standing and the farmer decides to use it for chopped bedding, or for cover crop, etc., the farmer then reports a 100 percent harvest, though he actually may have lost much of an expected crop.

The last weather and crop report in December was on the 20th and it showed a statewide 85 percent corn harvest. That amount had not changed as of Jan. 3.

From those reports, it's possible that the state's corn producers could have suffered a loss of as much as 15 percent of their crop, though it is not easy to support such an estimate.

The main reasons given for not being able to get into the fields to harvest corn was that the soil was too wet, the corn too immature, or the crop was too high in moisture.

Though not representative of the condition of the entire state by any means, two veterinarians who practice in the south central and southeastern regions of the state report a large increase in the incidents of mold-produced, toxin-poisonings among commercial livestock and poultry.

The advice from them is straightfoward: test.

And they both highly recommend using the state facility at Summerdale, because of its accuracy, expense and reputation.

"We're in for a bad year," said Timothy P. Trayer, DVM, a full partner in the Lancaster County-based association of Hutchison, Trayer and Reid.

"We would strongly recommend, if there is a concern, send (a feed sample) to Summerdale Diagnostic Lab. They have the best and most cost-effective anaylysis in the country," Trayer said.

A large part of Trayer's clientele consists of swine producers and the veterinarian said he has seen some of the problems associated with mycotoxins, which is the name for toxins produced by molds or, more correctly, fungi.

"Most commonly, what we're seeing is the feed refusal factor associated with vomitoxin," he said. "What usually happens with this is, the animal only eats enough to stay alive, tends to chew and spit back out and, if it ingests enough, will physically vomit from it.

"The other we're seeing is Fusarium rosi," Trayer said, adding that this is the mycotoxin which produces an estrogen-like chemical which stimulates some of the same responses in animals as does real estrogen, especially in female swine.

"You'll see all age females coming into a false heat," Trayer said. The females won't stand still to be mounted during this false heat, he said.

"Once you remove the feed, it takes two to three weeks to clear the body, but once it clears, the animal is reproductively back to normal."

Trayer said the most devastating myctoxin is aflatoxin, which is ironically also a problem of concern during drought, because dried-out shell corn cracks and exposes the starch to fungal attack.

He said that at certain levels of ingestment, the animal will have serious side effects, such as damaged livers, stunting of growth, and overall increased death loss of livestock.

Strangly enough, the corn still in the field may be no more of a problem than that already taken in.

"Some of the first corn coming out of the field was actually the worst," Trayer said. "The first had already produced toxin while in the field. One of the first calls I got was (associated with) . . . new corn back in October and Novemeber."

He said that once corn is identified as a problem, it can still be used as feed, if it is diluted with an adequate amount of unaffected corn so that toxin concentrations are pushed below the threshold of producing a reaction in the animal.

He also said that this year two feed additive products are being used to help absorb toxins out of the feed.

Both are included into the feed at a rate of about 10 pounds per ton and cost about $2.50 to $3 per ton to treat.

Other advice from Trayer was that if mold is visible, us a mold inhibitor when storing the grain. However, be aware that mold inhibitors whill not absorb propionic acid.

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