

## ABC In Good Shape, Direction Steady

VERNON ACHENBACH JR.  
ANDY ANDREWS

Lancaster Farming Staff  
MOUNT JOY (Lancaster Co.) — Atlantic Breeders Cooperative (ABC), based in Lancaster, began holding its annual district meetings this past week to elect officers, recognize outstanding members, and review its business position and goals.

Other meetings continue through Thursday (See the Farm Calendar, page A10.) Results of all elections are to be announced at a later date.

ABC in Lancaster County is divided into two districts — The Northern District (District 4), which is north of Rt. 30, and the Southern District (District 5).

District 4 is further subdivided into East and West. On Tuesday evening District 4 West held its meeting at the Country Table Restaurant in Mount Joy, and on Thursday evening District 4 East held its meeting at the Liberty Fire Hall in New Holland.

According to cooperative managers, ABC experienced a very favorable business year despite economic pressures facing dairy farmers. A report showed growth in both service volume and unit sales for the eighth consecutive year.

David Landis, director for District 4, said the cooperative is financially sound and the quality of genetics has been increasing.

According to Landis, some of the work done at the Lancaster stud included installing a new furnace, putting in a room for teasers, and remodeling of the semen collecting room.

"The financial situation is good. The cash position is strong," Landis said.

However, he did note that one area of business is starting to slide.

"International sales is one area which is dropping some," he said. "We had to raise technician fees a small amount. It was the first time (the fees were raised) in five

years."

A Long-Range Planning Committee has been formed and has adopted a mission statement which says, basically, that the committee intends to do the best job for members in securing its position in the federated family of cooperatives and to keep semen at a reasonable cost to members for the foreseeable future.

Landis said the cooperative has requested that the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Agricultural Cooperative Services agency conduct a comprehensive study to determine a comparison of the quality of genetics in cooperatives.

He said that the agency has not yet finished its research and has asked ABC and other cooperatives to furnish additional information, which is being done.

According to Landis, the Ag Co-op Services people are using six different criteria to compare cooperatives: the operations, research and development, genetics, member representation, positioning for the future, and member acceptance.

Furthermore, Landis said that the ABC committee is continuing to try to evaluate direction in the face of a downward trend in cows, increased production per cow, unclear economic and public policy, and a changing world economy and world trade agreements.

"But that's why the committee was formed," Landis said.

Chuck Allen, ABC operations director, talked about the stud and semen collecting procedures, showing slides of the facilities. Allen also talked about ABC policy regarding bulls carrying BLAD.

He said that the stud seeks to obtain young bulls for testing while they are between eight months and a year of age, so that the bulls can be completely health tested.

"It's as important now as when A.I. started," he said.

They keep the bulls in isolation until the health tests are performed



Honored at the ABC banquet Thursday night in New Holland were, from left, Glenn Gockley, Nevin and Denise Horning, Betty and Marvin Sauder, and John and Cheryl Zimmerman.

and testing is performed for genetic metabolic recessives, such as the BLAD.

BLAD has been an issue of concern, though its incidence has been relatively small, because it does cause an occasional loss of a milking animal for no apparent reason, and because it can be controlled to the point where BLAD should be an insignificant concern and eventually eliminated.

However, Allen said it will continue to show up and be a part of the genetics program for some time yet, because of a reluctance to destroy a bull which has other genetic traits of enough value to offset the potential loss of a cow through BLAD.

However, Allen said that starting last year, ABC has been rejecting bulls if they are discovered to be documented carriers of the recessive gene. He said last year six bulls were culled.

He said that much of the tracking for BLAD, and the decision to keep or kill, comes through the use of data compiled by the Holstein Association, Dairy Herd Improvement Association, and the USDA, all of which are accessible by ABC via computer link.

Although the co-op will no lon-

ger accept any BLAD carriers for testing, known BLAD bulls already in the testing program or recently started in the program will be culled unless they have been shown to be in the top 20 percent for any one of the desirable traits.

In effect, it means that there will still be some BLAD bulls entered into the active semen lineup, because of some outstanding traits, but, because of screening out BLAD on young bulls now, within four years the co-op will stop that practice.

However, Allen said that BLAD will continue to be around for some time, though its effect on the dairy industry should be almost unnoticeable.

Additionally, ABC tests for every major cattle disease.

On operations, Allen presented an overview of the housing for the bulls at Lancaster, discussing the isolation areas and the movement techniques.

He said the bulls and teasers are fed corn silage and that the A.I. co-op grows its own corn. They had a good year and had enough raised and harvested that they sold some.

Each bull is fed individually, wood shavings are used for bedding, and, in effect, the animals are

pampered.

Manure handling at the facility basically comes down to movement of a tractor-trailer load of shavings coming in a week, and an equal load with manure going out. The facility is designed to store up to three weeks of manure.

The bulls that weigh from 1,200 to 1,500 pounds are turned on their sides twice a year to have their hooves trimmed, while larger bulls are done standing, which he said is not without risk.

Allen also showed slides of semen collecting, which illustrated the potential risk the collectors take working with the animals, and the care and attention to detail used, such as rototilling the stonedust and sand footing in the collection stall.

In other business, the cooperative presented awards to members whose herds have recorded year-end production averages in excess of the top 10 percent of the Pennsylvania DHIA average for milk or protein. That comes to a herd average of 20,860 pounds of milk or 655 pounds of protein.

To be eligible for recognition, those milk herds must also be at

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