Dave Slusser Named General Manager Of Pennsylvania DHIA

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Frank Orner, Pennsylvania DHIA president, made the announcement of Dave's selection as the new general manager after lengthy discussions in the board meeting Monday afternoon. Orner said Dave will be responsible for overall adminstration of personnel, financial, and legal management of the association. This will include office, field, laboratory, and record processing services.

Dave holds a bachelor of science degree from Penn State and was named distinguished alumnus for the department of dairy and animal science in 1991. He worked for Penn State and Ohio State as an extension agent and was at one time employed with the Pennsylvania Holstein Association.

Most recently Dave was a Holstein breeder in Crawford County and served for 19 years on the Atlantic Breeders Coop board of directors, 10 years as president. He was a member of Federated Genetics Council, the National Association of Animal Breeders board, and the National Council on Dairy Cattle Breeding.

Dave's involvement with DHIA has included the Dairy Records Processing Advisory Committee and the State DHIA Task Force. In northwestern Pennsylvania, Dave served as a director of Farm Credit and taught computer seminars for regional farmers, a financial workshop for bankers, and courses on agricultural careers for high school students

In his local community Dave has served his church as moderator, deacon, trustee and Sunday School teacher. He served as a 4-H dairy club leader, a director of Crawford County Holstein Club, and a committee person for the extension dairy advisory committee.

Recently, Dave and his wife Kaye worked with Volunteers in Overseas Cooperative Assistance, advising farmers about forming cooperatives in Bolivia, South

Why settle for 2nd best

America. The Slussers have two children, Lee and Dana, who are both in college.

"I think Pennsylvania DHIA needs strong leadership," Dave said in an interview in the state office on Tuesday. "And the board of directors thought I was the one to give them that leadership as we make the transition into a competitive organization. I'm very humbled that they think I can handle that. I'm humbled by that confidence. There is an awful lot to do, and we might fail.

"I would have liked to have two years to learn everything about the organization so I could be prepared to lead. Even one year would have helped. But I need to learn real quick. DHIA is going through tremendous change from more or less a monopoly to a competitive organization. It almost seems to me that Pennsylvania is experiencing the blunt of this new experiment. I think this is the real challenge.

"Pennsylvania has a very excellent board of directors. But they have been criticized harshly and very unfairly in the past. I think they are and were honest men trying to do what they thought was right for all our members. They made mistakes. But they have a every other month in State College doesn't give them enough knowledge to run the day to day operation of the organization. They have to be led. I really believe a good farm organization has to have a good management leader. I'm not sure I'm the one, but I think every successful farm cooperative has annual evaluation by the National tell. had good management leadership. Dairy Herd Improvement

"My concern is for all dairymen but especially Pennsylvania dairymen. We are in hard times. Dairy, lently rated processing center; in farming is changing so fast, and other words, everything we do has I'm not sure the average dairyman been rated among the best in the is aware of what's happening. I'm nation. not sure DHIA has a grasp of what's happening.

"Herds are getting larger. We will always have the "part-time" herds and the large herds. The ership that draws people together. medium-size herds will fade away. We must work together or we are I've read these projections for many years. Our own herd was in the medium range, and I saw we needed to get larger or one of us needed to seek income off the And the market isn't going to do it. farm. We opted to take the punt option and sell the farm.

"It's hard to say why I wanted this job. I had other less risky job doesn't seem to work that way, but opportunities, but it seemed I was it's my mission. led in this direction. I really believe a lot of DHIA's problems image. You need to watch your could have been prevented through image as much as your actions. leadership. I have thought all along as things progressed that there were better ways to do it. But I don't want to dwell on that. We use it to bid against us. But the need to start where we are and move ahead. We can't do anything to not give cost information gives doing to farm families because far-

going to take some dramatic changes of policy and philosophy by the board, by the staff, and by the members. A lot of it is sheer leadership. We are brothers and sisters in this business. We are out for the member's good.

"Farmers need to be worked with and helped through changing times. The general manager is the rudder that steers the ship. That's true, but it's not true. The captain is is the board of directors. They set ens people's hearts. the direction of the ship.

"In the past few years, I think the motive of the board was to keep preparing for the future, and that was centralization. A lot of people were against centralization, but it makes sense. When you have four or five employees on your farm, you want them to be your employees. You don't want to go through another group or another farmer to your employees. I think that's what the board of directors was trying to do. Some mistakes were made that hurt that process.

"What I plan to do is spend a lot of time in the field. That will be hard because there is so much to do here in the office. But the members need to rebuild their trust in Pennsylvania DHIA, the board, the staff and the management. Trust needs to be built up. Distrust, real farm to run at home and a few days or imagined, has hurt us. So I plan to try to heal these problems from the bottom up. In the past it was build from the top down.

'We have an excellent lab. Nationally, it is rated 100 percent in quality work. We also have excellent field service technicians. Asosciation.

"In addition, we have an excel-

"But trust must be rebuilt. And this must be done reasonably fast. It's a real challenge.

"The dairy industry lacks leadgoing to die together. It's a peril that dairymen are in today because we can't work together. We can no longer expect government help. Markets will be competitive and cheap. Farmers can help themselves if they work together. It

Recently the comment was made that we don't want to give out cost information because people will other side of this reasoning is that about the past, but we can do an the impression (image) that we mers can't work together.

awful lot about the future. It's don't know what the costs are or what's going on. We know what the costs are, and we know what's going on, and we need to get people to know this.

"Farming has a way of hardening a person's heart. I saw it happening to me over the years. But I decided I wasn't going to allow the family business to make me less of a person. I caught that tendency in myself and corrected it. But I can above at the wheel and that captain certainly understand how it hard-

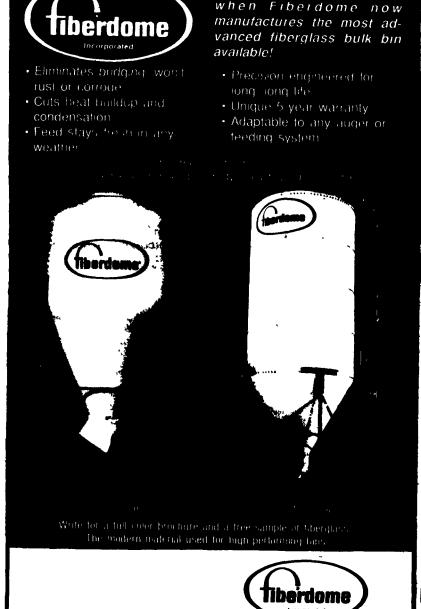
> "The same is true of the family. The worse you handle the pressures of life, the worse you deal with your family. We have to correct that. And my solution, the only solution that I see in all of this is to run the association by 'THE BOOK.' When you follow the guidelines in the Bible, you have a foundation that will help you. It will be hard, but I have the tools to handle it when someone gets angry with me. These tools are in The

"In Pennsylvania DHIA we are in a grave situation. We must stop the hemorrhaging of the organization. We have to appeal to the good businessmen on the dairy farm. A lot of people who make the most noise won't be in business a few years from now. I'm not sure where we will go in the future. But our mission is to make sure there is an excellent DHIA program for the dairymen in Pennsylvania. We want to do whatever is necessary to accomplish this. But I'm not sure we can continue with the program who also rated 100 percent in the as we now have it. It's too early to

> "We want to be friendly competitors with neighboring organizations so we don't burn any bridges that would keep us from forming alliances in the future. I'm going to try to work more closely with Lancaster and Crawford. We have allowed pride and stubbornness in the dairy industry to cost farmers too much for too long. And they can't afford the extra cost."

"But we will have to prove ourselves. To go in and pick off one herd at a time in the neighboring territories will be a win/lose situation. We need to work with other organizations in a cooperative way.

"I have always been a competi-'We at DHIA need to watch our tive man. I promoted free enterprise as a farmer. But I now hate what is has done to the family farm. I always wanted the government to get out of farming and let supply and demand take its course. But in all my years as a farmer, I don't think I realized what it was



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"I want to be the mediator, the liason between the factions in this organization. I want to pull people together. I believe that's my gift. It's certainly my goal to get farmers to work together. If at all possible, I would like to see all of Pennsylvania back together again. That would be my ultimate

"No, I don't mind if you put that in print."