

NMPF: Milk Consumption Unaffected By rBST Debate

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Milk consumption continued at a consistent pace for the third consecutive month since the government approved use of recombinant

bovine somatotropin (rBST), the genetically-engineered protein hormone that increases milk production in cows.

Agriculture Department data

show April milk consumption slipped a scant .2 percent when compared to year earlier figures. March data showed a .1 percent decrease in fluid milk consumption compared to the same month

last year. February's consumption increased a healthy .5 percent.

"The consumption figures have actually been better than the trend over the past 18 months," said Jim Barr, CEO of the National Milk Producers Federation. "We are pleased to see that American consumers continue to enjoy the nutritional benefits and good taste of milk."

Additionally, consumers are more keenly aware than ever about the use of rBST and its harmless nature, according to Barr. Barr also said Gallup tracking studies showed that consumer awareness of the use of rBST rose to 70 percent during April, a substantial increase from the 28 percent when the Food and Drug Administration initially approved rBST use last November.

The National Milk Producers Federation, and other members of the dairy industry, have worked diligently to assure Americans that milk continues to be the same safe, wholesome and nutritious

product since rBST first went into commercial use on U.S. dairy farms last Friday.

"The data from the past three months make it clear that the American public remains secure in the knowledge that milk is one of the safest, most healthy, nutritious products in American supermarkets," Barr said.

In March, USDA regional numbers for milk consumption showed the Southeast sector increasing by 1.2 percent compared with March of last year, the Northeast dropping by 1.6 percent, the Midwest decreasing by 1.2 percent, the Southwest dropping by 0.1 percent and the West increasing by 0.5 percent.

February USDA milk consumption figures showed the Northeast sector breaking even with February of last year, the Southeast increasing .3 percent, the Midwest dropping by .8 percent, the Southwest increasing by 2.3 percent and the West increasing by 2.8 percent.

Penn's Woods Suffers From Pests

HARRISBURG (Dauphin Co.) — The state's forests, especially across the northern tier, are suffering from several different attacks from insects and disease, but for the remainder of the year, there's not much to do, except watch and monitor.

According to a recent news release by the state Department of Environmental Resources (DER), "Pennsylvania is experiencing severe tree defoliation because of a number of insects and diseases.

"Outbreaks of elm spanworm, forest tent caterpillars, eastern tent caterpillars, cherry scallop shell moths and halfwing geometers are causing tree defoliation throughout the state," according to the news release.

A tree is considered defoliated if it loses 30 percent or more of its leaves, according to DER.

The elm spanworm and the geometers are both considered "loopers" which are larvae which are more commonly referred to as "inch-worms." The term refers to the insect larva's method of locomotion.

According to Barry Towers, PhD, with the DER Bureau of Forestry Division of Forest Pest Management, the use of pesticides using baccillus thuringensis (Bt) has been very effective in curtail-

ing a number of these pests, including the not-native gypsy moth caterpillar, although it is not used unless necessary to forest management.

The Bt-based pesticides are natural killers of insect larvae, such as caterpillars and black fly larva (the state is currently spraying the Susquehanna and other major waterways to control black-flies) and have been used for years to control gypsy moth. The material is ingested by the larvae and is toxic in its gut.

However, this latest outbreak of pests are mainly native species. According to Towers, occasionally native insects can grow to such levels that they become serious pests.

The normal expected response in the natural environment is for a delayed but correspondingly high increase in the number of natural predators of these now-pest insects.

That is occurring, although the extent and the degree of natural control is still uncertain.

In addition to the insect pests, there is also a disease, anthracnose, which is affecting sycamore trees. According to the news release, it "... is causing the browning and loss of leaves on sycamore trees.

Although this condition makes the trees unsightly and branch tips sometimes die, there is usually little permanent damage done to the trees."

DER Bureau of Forestry personnel are monitoring these and other insects and diseases from aircraft and the ground.

According to the news release, the elm spanworm last year defoliated more than 1.2 million acres of forest and is again a serious problem. Field evaluations are underway to predict the potential outbreak next year.

The same is true of the forest tent caterpillar, in that it is hitting the northern half of the state particularly hard.

The halfwing geometers are causing severe problems in scattered locations, while fall cankerworms are severe in local problems across the state.

The white tents of the eastern tentworm caterpillar are common on black cherry trees and can be seen along many highways.

Also, the adult moth flights of cherry scallop shell moth have been observed in north central counties and "significant defoliation of black cherry trees is expected when the insect reaches the caterpillar stage in July and August."

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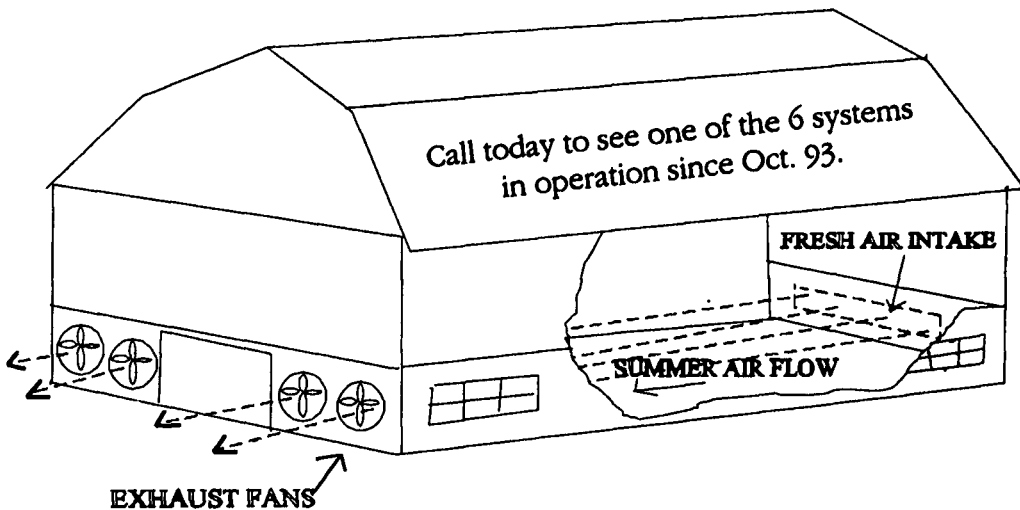
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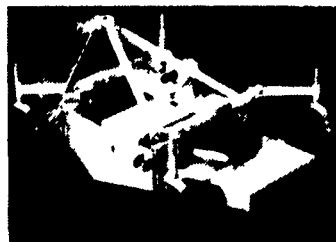
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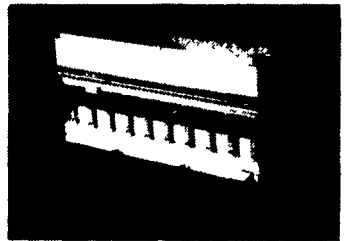
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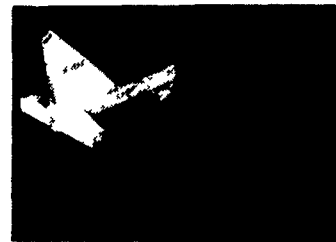
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