

No Such Thing As 'A Day In The Life Of A DHIA Technician'

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"I think the world of the computerization move," he says with enthusiasm, chuckling that he had no typing experience, started out as a "one-finger man" and is "now up to two fingers." But the speed of information processing allows him to have records printouts for clients' herds often before the meters have finished washing in the dairy house.

Edwards helped out on a Somerset County circuit for several weeks last winter and became especially fond of the many Amish families whose herds he tested. But his visits to the area so often coincided with bad weather that he suffered frequent kidding about his ability to bring blizzards. A regional DHIA representative who rode with him one day took no chances on Edwards' bad-weather reputation - and brought along his own snow shovel.

Reputation aside, his two-wheel-drive pickup only got slightly stuck once, while he retreated from trying to plow through high drifts on a road at Mt. Davis, highest point in Pennsylvania. But, part of the adventure of his job, he figures, is the "getting there."

"I love the farm," he insists. "Growing up on a farm and knowing how a farm family must struggle to make a living helps in being a technician."

Almost Un-Bear-Able Excitement Sometimes

"It's an exciting job. I like to see the new heifers and offspring of new sires come into my herds every year," says Wayne County technician Linda Wagner.

Linda originally began her DHIA career in Northampton County, then worked with her husband managing a herd before taking her present circuit, some 16 years ago. She currently tests 44 herds, many of them barns of 30-35 cows whose owners also hold off-farm employment. Three times each month, she double-shifts herds to accommodate the size of her testing circuit. Until earlier this year, she still tested one of the two goat herds that have

been included in her clientele over the years.

Enroute to test one foggy, summer morning, Linda saw from the corner of her eye a streak of brown coming toward her small station wagon. A good-sized bear smacked into the driver's side of her car. She swerved, the bear rolled over and took off, leaving behind a hunk of skin and tufts of hair - plus a couple of thousand dollars worth of damage to her battered, but still driveable, Chevy Cavalier.

"I wasn't late for work," she relates, adding, "But I had all the windows down on the car but the one on my door; if it had been open, that bear's head would have been in my lap."

Linda has also heard coyotes howling and yipping not far from one of her test barns, thought she declined to join the farmer who took his flashlight to go look for them. And, on a memorable Fathers' Day morning, a Jersey bull came "sailing down the lane" toward her while Linda was loading her equipment in through the open doors and hatchback of her car.

Weather rarely slows Linda, though she always carries a shovel and blankets in her car during winter months and has dug her vehicle out of snowdrifts. On occasion, she has just stayed with a farm family overnight during extremely treacherous storms.

In addition to the obvious DHIA changes, Linda has watched many changes take place on her farms.

"They've gone from bucket to pipeline, begun using silage bags and trenches, are moving from tie stalls to freestall and parlors. Some are progressing toward changes in manure storage and disposal of milkhouse waste water," she observes. More quality forage is being produced in Linda's opinion. She also is saddened by the farms being lost as dairymen go out of business.

Though it all, she has been close to her testing clients, especially those family-farm opera-

tions. Through births and deaths, accidents and moments of hilarity, Linda, like the majority of the professional dairy herd testing technicians, connect beyond the mere testing aspect of DHIA by sharing moments of their lives.

"Our primary concern is our members and their economic survival and their ability to compete in the dairy industry," says Dave Slusser, general manager of the

Pennsylvania DHIA. "Technicians collect information which can help improve profits for our farm families. Our member herds average 4,000 pounds more milk per cow than herds that do not do production testing."

In the life of a DHIA technician, fulfilling that commitment to the membership, an "ordinary day" probably doesn't exist.

They may start their jobs in the middle of the night - and end it in

the middle of the next one. Weather, snarling dogs, angry bulls - and bears - may slow them, but rarely keeps them from getting to their clients' farms. They are professional information gatherers and processors, sounding boards on agriculture issues, listening ears for personal problems, may have to chase cats and the occasional inquisitive little kid out of their cars, all while providing a vital service to the dairy industry.

Pa. Council Of Co-ops To Sponsor Conference

STATE COLLEGE (Centre Co.) — The Pennsylvania Council of Cooperatives (PCC) will once again host their annual Young Cooperative Leader's Conference on July 6 - 8 at the Ramada Inn, in Altoona.

A highlight of the conference will be a series of workshops and presentations by nationally known speaker, Dr. Ron Hansen of the University of Nebraska. Dr. Hansen will address a variety of farm family issues, including the importance of effective communications and listening skills. He will be sponsored by Nationwide Insurance.

"Nationwide's participation is extremely valuable to both the council and the young farmers in the Commonwealth," said Crystal Smithmyer, executive director of PCC. "Dr. Hansen is an excellent speaker with an important message regarding farm family relationships. Nationwide support allows us to offer this first-class workshop."

In addition to Hansen's workshops, participants will also learn about cooperative basics and spend several hours involved in a hands on "Management for Success" workshop. There will also be ample opportunity for fun and

fellowship while swimming, picnicking or enjoying an ice cream social.

For more information about this worthwhile conference, please contact PCC at (814) 231-3010.

PCC is a statewide association of cooperative businesses owned and controlled by farmers and rural Pennsylvanians. Its membership includes major marketing and farm supply cooperatives, the Farm Credit Associations of Pennsylvania as well as rural electric cooperatives. Organized in 1933, PCC is the voice for agricultural and rural cooperatives operating in Pennsylvania.

Field Day Requests Exhibitors

LANCASTER (Lancaster Co.) — The Lancaster County Conservation District is soliciting exhibitors for its first annual Lancaster County Conservation Exposition on Saturday, August 27 at the David Becker farm in Mount Joy Township.

The focus of the day is on protection of water quality for farmers and homeowners with presentations on measuring crop residue, conservation tillage demonstrations, lawn care for your home, and home septic system management.

If your business would be interested in having a display or in demonstrating a conservation tillage implement, contact Jim Shirk at the Lancaster County Conservation District (717) 299-5361 for more information. Deadline to register is July 22.

Feedlot Management Forum Set

NEW HOLLAND (Lancaster Co.) — To improve Pennsylvania's competitive position within the cattle feeding industry, a special Feedlot Management Forum will be held on Thursday, July 7, here at Yoder's Family Restaurant.

The program will begin at noon,

with lunch, and conclude by 5:30 p.m.

In addition to comments from both of Pennsylvania's major packers, attendees will have an opportunity to hear from Nebraska and Delaware cattle feeders. They will discuss management practices considered to be crucial to

profitability in cattle feeding. The program will conclude with a discussion on the type of strategies and alliances necessary to move the industry forward.

The registration fee for the forum, which includes lunch, is \$25. Advance registrations are required and can be made by calling (800) 572-2020.

Public Auction Register

Closing Date Monday 5:00 P.M.
of each week's publication

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THURS. JULY 7 - 12 Noon,
Restaurant Equipment,
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