

## USDA Schedules Regional Forum On Ag, Environment

ANKENY, Iowa — U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) officials want to know what you think the most important natural resource conservation issues are on agricultural and private forest land in the northeastern United States and what federal policy makers and program administrators should do to help resolve those issues.

Organizations and individuals are invited to offer their views at a public forum on Monday, July 25, at the Inn at Reading in Reading, Pa.

"We want to hear the views of grassroots interests on what the most important natural resource management issues are and what they think should be done to deal with these issues," said Paul Johnson, chief of USDA's Soil Conservation Service (SCS).

The forum is scheduled to start at 9 a.m. It will continue through the afternoon, with a break for lunch. An informal registration begins at 8:15 a.m. There is no cost for participating in the forum.

The Reading forum is one of eight public forums that will be held across the country this summer by SCS on behalf of a USDA farm bill task force on environment and conservation. The theme of the forums is "Agriculture and the Environment: Listening to the Grassroots."

The Reading forum will include presentations by agricultural, environmental, and consumer-inter-

est groups and individuals. These groups will be asked to offer their views on the critical conservation problems or issues on agricultural and private forest land in the region, the causes of those problems or issues, and how federal policy-makers and program administrators should deal with the problems or issues.

Open-microphone periods are also planned that will give other

interest-group representatives and citizens attending the forum an opportunity to offer their views as well.

A listening panel of USDA leaders from Washington, D.C. will be at the forum to respond to the presentations and other comments.

"There is tremendous public interest in soil conservation, water quality, wetlands, and other natural resource conservation issues,"

Johnson said. "We want to tap into the knowledge and ideas that groups and individuals involved in these issues have in setting the conservation agenda at USDA."

The Soil and Water Conservation Society (SWCS) is cooperating with SCS in organizing the forum. SWCS is an international, nonprofit organization that is known for its ability to bring diverse interests together on natural resource management and agricul-

tural conservation issues.

More information about the forum can be obtained by calling SWCS headquarters tollfree at (800) THE SOIL, ext. 14 or 22.

Those who cannot attend the forum but wish to offer USDA their comments and ideas should write "Listening Project," Soil and Water Conservation Society, 7515 Northeast Ankeny Road, Ankeny, IA 50021-9764.

## Control May Radically Reduce Pesticide Use

NEWARK, Del.— A new toxic bait that uses a feeding stimulant to attract rootworm beetles would allow farmers to reduce pesticide applications to control this important crop pest by 99 percent. The catch is ensuring that the beetles don't become resistant to the product.

Dr. Douglas Tallamy, an insect behaviorist in the department of entomology and applied ecology at the University of Delaware, is screening the beetles for their ability to develop genetic resistance to cucurbitacins, the attractant being used. His research is supported in part by a Delaware Research Partnership grant from Microflo Company and the state of Delaware.

Cucurbitacins are extremely bitter compounds found in gourds, squash, cucumbers and other members of the cucurbit family. These compounds apparently

have the same sort of appeal for rootworms that chocolate has for many people.

The bait consists of small amounts of cucurbitacins incorporated into starch granules along with a small amount of pesticide. When the granules are applied on a field, rootworm beetles leave the crop they're feeding on to gobble up the bait. Other animals and beneficial insects won't touch it.

Chemical companies spend millions of dollars to develop, test and register a new pesticide. But if the largest insect develops genetic resistance to it, the manufacturers may never recover their investment.

The developers of this promising bait want to be sure this doesn't happen. So before investing heavily in the product, they enlisted Tallamy's help.

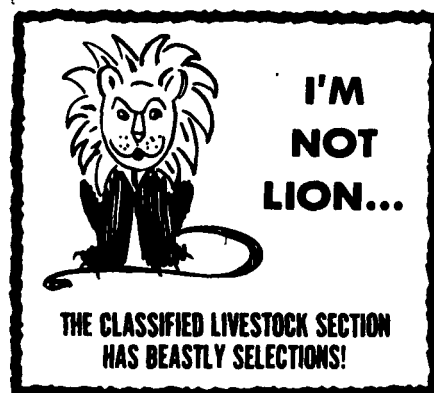
To answer their questions, he is studying the response of six dif-

ferent rootworm species to cucurbitacins.

"We're quantifying each species' response to measure its sensitivity to cucurbitacins," Tallamy said. "If there's a lot of genetic variation in the responses, judicious use of the bait and adjustments in its cucurbitacin content can slow the development of resistance. If we find very little genetic variation, the companies can use this fact as a selling point

for their product."

More than 1,500 species of rootworm beetle exist worldwide. In the United States alone, adults and larvae of southern, western, and northern corn rootworms cause an estimated \$1 billion a year in yield loss and insecticide costs in corn and other crops. The adult beetles also spread bacterial wilt disease in a number of high-value cucurbit crops.



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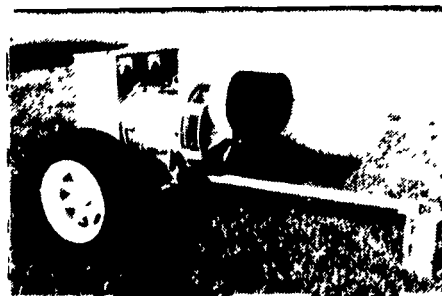


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