

ABA Works Toward Genetic Improvement

BRATTLEBORO, Vt. — Ayrshire enthusiasts and board members who attended Ayrshire Breeders' Association forums at either World Dairy Expo or the North American International Livestock Exposition agreed that genetics will be their top priority.

"We spent a lot of our time discussing genetics, particularly the use of young sires," said Jim McConnell, Ayrshire Breeders' Association president. "We left convinced that breeders and the AI industry will work together more closely to put more qualified young sires into testing programs.

"I have not been more optimistic about the future for our Ayrshire breeders than I am today," said McConnell at the end of the October board meeting in Madison, Wisc. "Working together as a team, we can see our objectives accomplished and be rightly proud of our association and the programs and services it provides."

The board spent almost its entire meeting in working on a

strategic plan that will guide the association for the next five to ten years. Genetic improvement and promotion, as noted in the surveys, forums and other discussions among breeders and members, occupies the forefront of that plan. The board established several objectives to escalate the economic traits that assure profitable Ayrshire herds. Promotion of the breed and its benefits will take front stage.

McConnell said the positive financial position of the Association is a step in the right direction, and just cause for optimism.

"We expect to complete our second year in a row with a positive financial position, setting us apart from the trends of the other breeds," he said. "We all recognize that we have a lot of challenges ahead of us, but it's comforting to know that we are ready to meet them in a new and exciting way. We have taken bold steps to assure that Ayrshires will be making news for the foreseeable future."

Agency Combines Farm Service Functions

POTTSVILLE (Schuylkill Co.) — Changes are coming — and it's the Farm Service Agency (FSA).

It came into being recently, when President Clinton signed into law a restructuring plan for the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) that will improve the way USDA agencies do business in Schuylkill County, said Roger Neumeister, acting chairman of the Schuylkill County FSA committee.

The FSA will administer commodity price and income support programs, farm ownership, and operating loans and the federal crops insurance program. The new agency combines all or part of three agencies familiar to farmers — the Agricultural Stabiliza-

tion and Conservation Service (ASCS), the Farmers Home Administration (FmHA), and the Federal Crop Insurance Corporation. Other loans offered by the former FmHA will be assigned to a new rural development agency.

In addition, the FSA will offer conservation cost-share assistance under the Agricultural Conservation Program, as well as cost-sharing and land rental payments for the Conservation Reserve Program.

"We want producers to know that the reorganization did not eliminate any programs," he said. "What will change are that these services soon will be available to producers on a 'one-stop' basis. The whole purpose of the new FSA is to be able to provide bet-

ter, more efficient service and to make it easier for farmers to use our programs.

"The agencies are merging at headquarters first," Roger said. "The combination of staffs and functions at the county level will come in time. In the meantime, farmers can receive service as usual at their county offices."

In Pennsylvania, most USDA offices are located with others in the same county. Some cross-sharing of equipment and space already occurs. However, more sharing of data will occur between staffs in these offices.

At the local level, farmer-elected committee members will continue to oversee farm program administration and will take on additional duties in overseeing other FSA programs.

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To the Farmers of Lancaster, Pennsylvania I would like to say "Hello" to all of the farmers and friends of Pennsylvania. We are getting ready to start our 1994-1995 tobacco auction season December 5th. I understand we have a good crop this year and it looks like there is a good demand for our crop. This is the ninth season in Pennsylvania for the auction system. This system has worked hard for the farmer in previous years and will continue to work hard for you, the farmer, this year. The auction system is no better than the farmer who stands by it. Happy Thanksgiving from your friend and auctioneer. Mitch Ashby

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