

## Alfalfa Varieties From Ag Experiment Station

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It all started more than forty years ago. My predecessors at Cornell, Drs. Royce Murphy & Carl Lowe, began working with alfalfa germplasm that proved to be ideally suited to the Northeast. I continued to improve this germplasm after arriving at Cornell in the late 1970's. Oneida VR was the first prominent commercial variety we released from this germplasm in the 1980's. It was our first verticillium wilt resistant variety, and still has the highest resistance level to this devastating alfalfa disease. Pinnacle, Medallion, and Guardsman are more recent releases from this material with additional genetic improvements in each variety.

At Cornell, we think it's important to recognize that alfalfa growing conditions are unique in the Northeast, compared to other parts of the country; especially the Mid-

west. Shallower soils, yield and stand life robbing diseases, and weather patterns all make a difference in what alfalfa varieties work best over the life of the stand.

Our alfalfa plant breeding at Cornell is built around selection of superior parent plants for future varieties. Our breeding nurseries represent various soil types typical of farms in our region. Healthy, productive plants are observed at each of three cuts in two production years before selection and advancement. Other alfalfa programs may advance material faster, sometimes with much less actual field screening. While this may produce new varieties faster, we feel our method produces varieties with pinpoint regional adaptation. This breeding success can be illustrated.

Our newer varieties, such as Medallion, are holding up well in yield trials, improving in performance as the stand ages! They



Cornell University Drs. Julie Hansen and Don Viands, center, discuss alfalfa breeding improvements with Seedway Marketing Director Gene Hohl.

have competed well in the seeding year and the first full year of production, but have really shown their disease resistance advantages over other varieties in year three and four by sustaining yield: less adapted varieties have faded. Changing our checks in New York variety trials in '94 from older varieties Oneida & Saranac AR to modern varieties Oneida VR and Pinnacle resulted in a higher "standard of comparison" for other varieties to be measured against. This resulted in many varieties from outside our region performing at a lower percent of checks or below the checks.

There are other current issues alfalfa growers need to know about to make informed variety selections. "Bells and whistles" are being touted in new alfalfa varieties that have little economic impact, at least in our region: the multi-leaf trait, aphanomyces resistance, certain pest resistances. The big five diseases of alfalfa impact alfalfa performance the most, and resistance of moderate or higher levels to Verticillium,

Fusarium, & Bacterial wilts along with Anthracnose and Phytophthora Root Rot should receive primary attention. We have done this in developing Pinnacle, Medallion, and Guardsman and you can see the results in the field as the stands age.

Standability and forage quality of these varieties is also excellent. They are capable of producing forage that Cornell ruminant nutritionists tell us is nearly ideal for dairy feeding—up to 22% protein, (more than 22% is no advantage, actually taking extra energy away from production to convert excess protein for excretion), with ADF and NDF fiber levels in the 30 & 40% range respectively. They also yield more consistently than widely promoted "high quality" varieties coming out today. It's interesting that these "high quality" alfalfa varieties tout lower fiber content. We have seen reduced standability in lower fiber varieties with as little as one half to one percent less fiber. So, our direction at Cornell is to maintain standability while improving forage quality with "quality" fiber fractions instead of lowering total fiber concentration of the plant. Fiber is necessary and important to animal health & productivity.

Dormancy and winterhardiness are current questions. Cornell developed varieties are dormancy 4 with exceptionally good stand life. We find they have about the best combination of early spring and fall growth. This, along with good regrowth after cutting, is associated with Flemish germplasm crossed to other highly adapted material.

Their adaptation is proven over many years for all of Pennsylva-

nia, New York, Maryland, New Jersey and the eastern part of Ohio.

We're working on exciting alfalfa projects for the future, however Pinnacle, Medallion, and Guardsman represent the leading edge in commercial alfalfa varieties for the Northeast today.

## Farmers Named To National Posts

ALBANY, N.Y. — Six New York farmers were named by American Farm Bureau President Dean Kleckner to national commodity committees.

The purpose of these committees is to advise the board of directors of the 4.3 million member American Farm Bureau Federation concerning commodity issues confronting the nation's farm families.

According to New York Farm Bureau President John Lincoln, "We are pleased that several New York farmers have been named to national leadership posts in Farm Bureau. The committees on which they serve play a vital role in examining commodity-related issues and providing counsel to the American Farm Bureau's board of directors."

Agricultural Nursery & Greenhouse Committee: Charlie Scheer (Ch.), Suffolk County; Dairy Committee: Jon Greenwood (Ch.), St. Lawrence County; Forestry Committee: David Tetz, Schuyler County; Horticulture Committee: Chip Bailey, Wayne County; Feed Grains: Don Waterman, Cayuga County; Labor Committee: Rod Dressel, Ulster County.

## Cattle Feeder's Day Set

LANCASTER (Lancaster Co.) — You are invited to attend the Lancaster County Cattle Feeder's Day on Tuesday, January 31, from 8:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. at the Farm and Home Center.

The day's educational program

- 8:30 a.m. - Visit Agribusiness Exhibits. Coffee and donuts compliments of Keystone Farm Credit
- 9:30 a.m. - "1995 Cattle and Feed Outlook" H. Louis Moore, Penn State Extension Economist
- 10:30 a.m. - "Ration Formulation for Incoming Cattle" Dr. Francis Fluharty, Research Scientist, Ohio State University
- 11:15 a.m. - "Meat Industry Issues For Cattlemen" K.T. Miller, Monfort, Greeley, CO. Billy Lloyd, National Cattlemen's Assn., Englewood, CO.
- 12:00 Noon Lunch - Tickets available at registration table until 11:30 a.m.
- 1:15 p.m. - "Beef Industry Long-Range Plan" Dave Ivan, Executive Director, Pa. Beef Council
- 1:30 p.m. - "Zero Tolerance - Insights and Obstacles" - Panel Discussion, Dr. Bill Henning, Moderator, Penn State Extension Meats Specialist. Panelists: K T. Miller, Monfort, Greeley, CO.; Myron Stoltzfus, Stoltzfus Meats, Intercourse; Walter Olster, Staff Officer, FSIS, USDA, Philadelphia; Billy Lloyd, National Cattlemen's Assn., Englewood, CO.
- 2:30 p.m. - "Proper Handling of Cattle Vaccines", Dr. Tom Drake, Penn State Extension Veterinarian
- 3:00 p.m.- Questions/Answers/Adjournment

will again provide useful information for use in your beef feeding operation. In addition, you will also have the opportunity to visit with commercial exhibitors, ag businessmen, fellow cattle feeders, and friends.

Lunch is available.

## Mid East UDIA Meetings Set

COLUMBUS, Ohio—Dairy producers in Ohio, West Virginia, Pennsylvania, and northern Kentucky will have the opportunity to learn how their 15-cent promotion investment is making a difference for the dairy industry.

Mid East United Dairy Industry Association (Mid East UDIA), the advertising and promotion organization for Federal Orders #33 and

#36 and the Pennsylvania Dairy Promotion Program, will host five annual meetings in 1995. The meetings will highlight programs that ultimately increase dairy product consumption.

Producers may choose the meeting that is the most convenient. Listed below are the dates and places of each meeting:

- Thursday, March 9 Minster, OH at the Knights of Columbus Hall
- Friday, March 10 Smithville, OH at The Barn
- Tuesday, March 21 Somerset, PA at the Ramada Inn
- Wednesday, March 22 Meadville, PA at the Holiday Inn
- Wednesday, March 29 Lewisburg, WV at the Brier Inn

All meetings will begin with registration at 9:30 a.m. The information meeting will begin at 10 a.m. as Mid East UDIA management shares how their team of marketers, dietitians, home economists and communicators work to increase the demand for dairy products. Lunch will be served at noon and is free to those in attendance.

One additional annual meeting will be held April 6 in conjunction with the Spring Dairy Spectacular Dairy Show in Columbus, Ohio.

Dairy producers in F.O. #33 and 36 and the Pennsylvania Dairy Promotion Program will receive invitations to the annual meetings. Others interested in attending may RSVP by calling Mid East UDIA at 1 (800) 292-MILK.

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