

## Workshop On New Zealand Dairying At Conference

STATE COLLEGE (Centre Co.) — As a presenter at the annual conference of the Pennsylvania Association for Sustainable Agriculture, to be held Feb. 3-4 at the Nittany Lion Inn, Doug Parker, dairy farm manager and consultant at Shelburne Farms in Shelburne, Vt. will speak on the applicability of New Zealand dairy grazing systems in Pennsylvania.

This will be just one of many conference workshops designed with dairy farmers in mind.

Parker is the son of a pioneer New Zealand dairy farmer and grew up on a large family dairy there. Four of his brothers are farmers in New Zealand. Doug received a degree in farm consulting and real estate appraisal from Lincoln University in New Zealand and then worked for a bank doing farm loans, management consulting with farmers, and budgeting. He later relocated to Ohio where he worked as a builder, personal financial consultant and in real estate, as well as raising beef. In the past two years, he has done consulting work with farmers from Pennsylvania and West Virginia to Oklahoma.

As farm manager at Shelburne Farms, where he has been since last summer, Parker is responsible for the development of an infrastructure (fences, water, two new milking parlors, etc.) to support an increase in the dairy herd from the current 60 head of Brown Swiss to a total of approximately 300 cows. Although Shelburne is a nonprofit institution "dedicated to teaching

and demonstrating the stewardship of natural resources," the dairy farm is required to make a profit and has done so by processing all milk into cheddar cheese. Last year, Shelburne won an award from the American Cheese Society for the "Best Specialty Cheese in the U.S.," and produced about 80,000 pounds. As the herd increases, projections are for 200,000 pounds of cheese to be produced per year.

When asked how New Zealand dairy farming differs from American dairying, Parker said that farmers here focus on the cows and not on grass/forage production. "Our aim [in New Zealand] is to produce a high-quality, high-yield, highly palatable, perennial forage consisting of grasses and legumes which is harvested 8 to 12 times per year by the animals. We strive to produce a meadow, as opposed to just pasture. To us, the meadow is first, cows second. We look at production per man (not per cow), and net profit per acre as measuring sticks," he said.

Other areas where New Zealand farm methods could benefit Pennsylvania dairies are in the construction of milking parlors ("cow sheds," to Parker), and the handling of manure during the few months of the year when the cows are not outside. New Zealand "cow sheds" are simple, low cost, relatively easy to build, and offer a high speed through-put of cows at milking time. Says Parker, "most New Zealand farmers hate to milk cows," thus they have developed

ways to do it as quickly and efficiently as possible.

Manure management systems in New Zealand are based on a "barrier ditch system," in which trenches are built and the manure is stored there for later spreading. This system and the equipment to empty it can be purchased for a cost of \$5000 to 10,000, far less than most automated American manure management systems. Parker is amazed at what some farms are spending here on manure handling.

In addition to talking with farmers, Parker likes to show bankers and businessmen that farming can be just as profitable (income producing) as any other investment if managed well. One area in which he is strict in his financial analysis is in making sure that the cost of "improvements" is equal to their value. He says of milking parlors in the U.S., "there are too many old overloaded, souped-up Cadillacs, when what is needed is a new stripped Ford pick-up simple, with a minimum of metal for manure to stick to."

"The cost of a new milk house or other improvement should increase the value of the farm by the exact same amount invested, and too often that is not the case," he said.

In addition to his workshop on

"New Zealand Dairy Grazing Systems: Applicability to Pennsylvania," Parker will also serve on a panel on the "Economics of Dairy Grazing," with Mark Mapes, a Union County, Pa. dairy farmer and Forrest Stricker, a dairyman from Berks County, Pa.

Other workshops of interest to dairy farmers will look at seasonal dairying, making the transition to

dairy grazing, rBGH, connections between soil and animal health, holistic resource management (HRM), and pasture basics. At the end of the conference, there will be a Farmer-to-Farmer Exchange session on "Grazing Livestock."

For further information, and/or a registration form, contact PASA at P.O. Box 419, Millheim, PA 16854, (814) 349-9856.

## Applegate Is Outstanding Fruit Grower

FREEHOLD, N. J. — Norman Applegate, owner and operator of Battleview Orchards in Freehold, is the 1994 recipient of the Outstanding Fruit Grower Award presented annually by the New Jersey Horticultural Society.

In announcing the award, Genie DeCou, president of the society, said, "Norman was recognized with a plaque and lifetime membership because of his dedication to agriculture, the fruit industry, and operation of an innovative and progressive fruit growing and marketing organization."

Applegate grows more than 100 acres of apples, peaches, and cherries, and markets everything through a modern retail market as well as a pick-your-own sales outlet. This operation was recently expanded with the purchase of 620

acres near Shoreham, Vt. Approximately 100 acres of dwarf apples are grown at this time. Applegate's son, Scott, is active in the business with him.

Said DeCou, "Norman is a past president and director of the New Jersey Horticultural Society and past chairman of the New Jersey Apple Industry Council. He was also a member of the board of directors of the International Apple Institute and the National Apple Institute."

Other industry experience for Applegate was secretary of the Jersey Fruit Marketing Cooperative. He serves on the board of directors of the cooperative. Applegate serves on the board of directors of First Pioneer Farm Credit and served as chairman and director of North Central Jersey Farm Credit.

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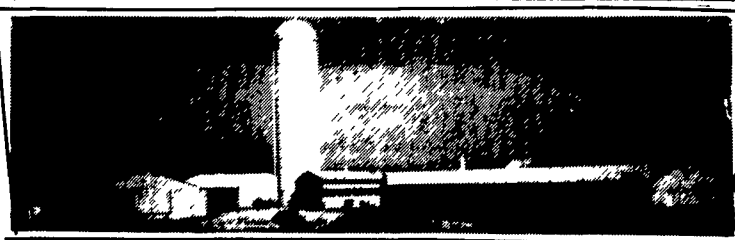
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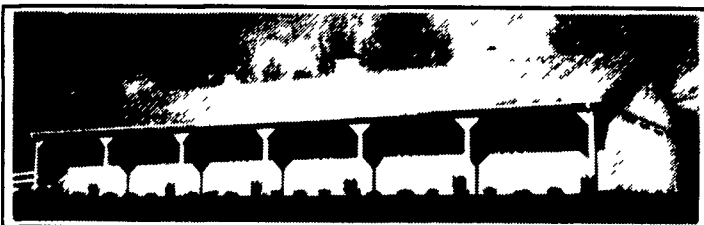
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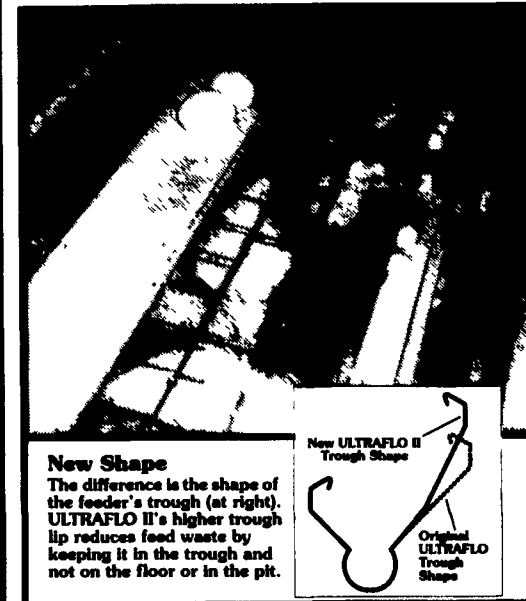
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