

# Ag Seminar Provides Education, Opinion, Fellowship

**VERNON ACHENBACH JR.**  
Lancaster Farming Staff  
**PRESCOTT** (Lebanon Co.) — Though bovine somatotropin (BST) is the most researched and documented safe product ever reviewed by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, future genetically altered products also should be well researched before being approved, according to a genetic researcher with an institute devoted to researching applications of the technique.

David Stern, an associate scientist with the Boyce Thompson Institute for Plant Research, located at Cornell University, Ithaca, N.Y. told several hundred farmer-clients of Lebanon Valley National Bank (LVNB) that genetic engineering is a relatively simple tool for creating new variations of plants, but it should be used wisely, and cautiously.

Stern, one of several speakers during LVNB's annual agriculture seminar held Wednesday at the Prescott Fire Hall in eastern Lebanon County, explained the basic procedure of genetic engineering to the group, stressing that it is not a cure-all for the world's problems, but that it is a tool for plant and animal development that can eliminate possibly decades of traditional breeding techniques to arrive at a beneficial variety.

He said that it would take him about six months to come up with a new variety of a plant using genetic engineering techniques, instead of perhaps 10 years.

Stern said his job at the not-for-profit research institute is to "expand essential knowledge of plants and other organisms for the benefit of man." He said that his genetics work concentrates more on plant pests and basic research. Basic research results, he said, take 10 to 12 years to show up in actual products.

While he had no predictions for how the farm community may be involved in the future of genetic

applications, he said he personally would like to see his research benefit the world's poorer nations, by making them less dependent on the products of wealthy nations.

In another segment of the day-long seminar, a panel addressed the issue of BST, now more than a year in use in the United States. The panel was moderated by Bob Yonkers, Penn State assistant professor of agricultural economics.

Also on the panel were dairymen Dennis Drager, of Marietta, Joe Snavelly, of Manheim, and Vincent Wagner, of Myerstown area. Veterinarian Lynn Sammons, of Willow Creek Animal Hospital, who also works with Monsanto Corp. in helping producers use and understand the company's approved BST product, Posilac, also was on the panel.

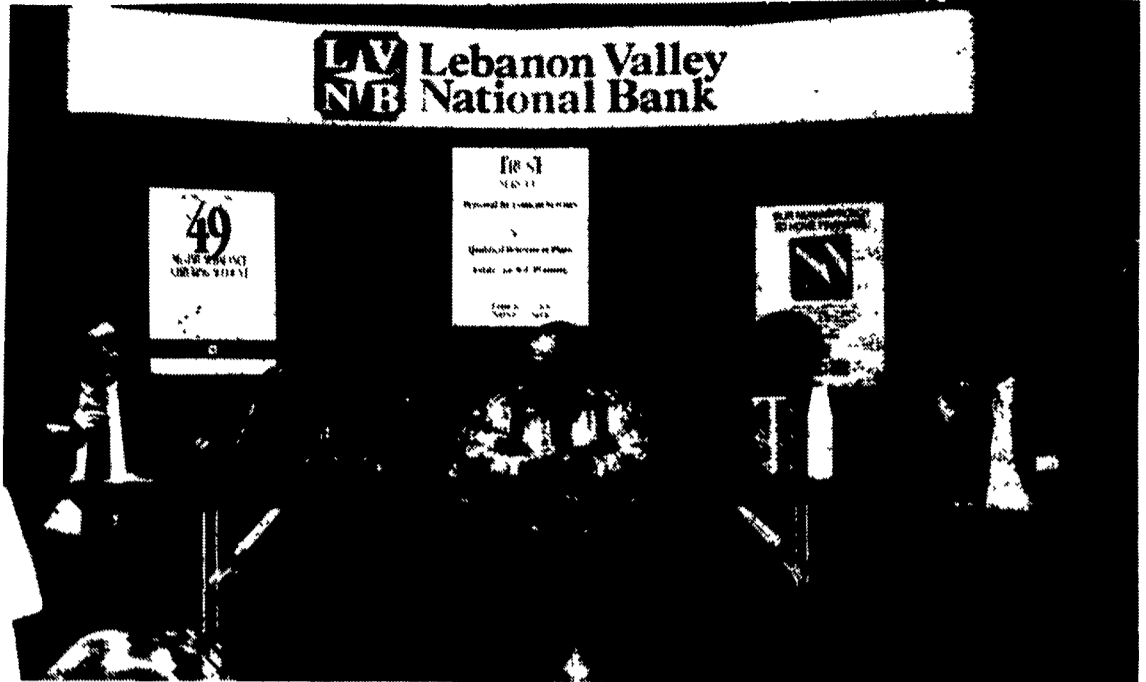
Yonkers had prepared a number of questions to ask the panel, concerning their experiences with BST, what responses they have seen, from milk production to animal health to economic.

According to Yonkers, Monsanto reports that in the first 11 months of its approval for sale, the company has sold 14.5 million units of Posilac, with 53 percent of that coming within the past five months. He said it is estimated that 11 percent of the milk shippers in the U.S. are using the product and that 30 percent of the people using it bought it for the first time within the past five months, several months after the company's special introductory price offer ended.

All dairymen had self-described family farm operations of medium to small size, though different in feeding, management, and buildings.

Wagner had the highest averaging herd and does not use the product, though he is more involved in marketing Holstein breeding stock than the others. He said his herd average is around 24,000 pounds of milk.

According to Wagner he ships



From the left, Bob Yonkers poses a question to a panel of people involved with dairy production and BST, who are Dennis Drager, Joe Snavelly, Vincent Wagner, and Lynn Sammons.

his milk to local processor Wengert's Dairies, in Lebanon County, which is also part of Graybill's Dairies in Lancaster. The company (and some other small dairies) had announced last year that it would not accept milk produced by cows injected with the BST.

However, there's no way of knowing from testing the milk whether the milk came from a BST-injected or non-BST injected cow. The milk processor does reward its suppliers with a 10-cent per hundredweight premium for not using BST. Its producers can use BST if they want to, but they must forgo the premium, according to Wagner.

Snavelly said he uses BST and has a small milking herd and has a herd average of about 20,000 pounds of milk. According to panel discussions, in addition to the use of BST, the major difference between Snavelly and Wagner in management had to do with

feeding a totally mixed ration (TMR).

Snavelly said he has old facilities and feeds from a cart, but feeds well. He doesn't use BST on all of his cows, but he found that it has helped increase his milk production with no noticeable increase in feed, and it gave him flexibility in making certain decisions.

For example, while Drager said he doesn't waste BST on "tail-enders" (those cows finishing up a lactation), Snavelly said that doing just that helped him bring in cash instead of losing it.

Snavelly said he had some cows that wouldn't conceive again and were destined for culling. He said with low culling prices, he figured he could make more money using BST to continue milking those cows for awhile, instead of drying them off and selling them for meat at basement prices.

As a veterinarian who is on an advisory board to Monsanto Corp., Sammons said that the Willow

Creek Animal Hospital practice actually has the most number of clients using BST in the Northeast.

According to Sammons, 65 different clients are using Posilac and he has had no complaints from problems associated with its use. He said that statewide, he estimated that four cases were reported to the company in which a client believed some problem on the farm was caused by using BST.

But he said he wasn't familiar with details of those cases, although he said he has had some clients stop using the product for two reasons: too much time involved in giving shots; they couldn't see the benefits.

He said that some people will not see benefits, especially if there are other management deficits to production.

First and foremost, Sammons and the producers all seemed to agree that cow comfort is key to milk production. Sammons said

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## SEVENTEENTH ANNUAL

### Keystone Pork Expo to be held Feb. 15, 1995

Lebanon Valley Expo Center, Lebanon Valley Fairgrounds, Lebanon, PA Cornwall & Rocherty Roads

No Registration Fee

<b>TRADE SHOW</b> North Hall	1:30 pm	<i>Public Speaking Contest</i> Winners Host: Bruce Lemmon
8:00 am <i>Registration - Door Open to Trade Show</i>	1:50 pm	<i>Establishing a Marketing Network</i> Tom Congelton
<b>SEMINARS Center Hall</b> <i>Morning Session:</i> Moderator Ken Kephart	2:45 pm	<i>Market Outlook</i> H. Lous Moore
9:30 am <i>Welcome</i> Ken Kephart	<b>JR. PUBLIC SPEAKING CONTEST</b> Lebanon County Extension Office Chairman - <b>Bruce Lemmon</b>	
9:45 am <i>Benefits of Multiple Site Production</i> Kirk Clark	9:30 am	<i>Ages 16-19</i>
10:45 am <i>Keeping Top Notch Employees</i> Gary Maas		<i>Ages 12-15</i>
11:45 am <i>The Nutrient Management Law: An Update</i> Dennis Zimmerman	12:30 pm	<i>Ages 8-11</i>
<b>Afternoon Session</b> Moderator - Ken Kephart	<b>KEYSTONE PORK BOWL</b> Lebanon County Extension Office Chairman - <b>Kenneth Winebark</b>	
	9:30 am	<i>Preliminary Eliminations</i>
	2:00 pm	<i>Final Elimination</i>

**LEGISLATIVE ACTIVITY FUN AUCTION**  
North Hall  
To be held immediately following seminar program

*Presiding*  
Abe Fisher  
*Auctioneer*  
Harry Bachman

Industry products will be donated.  
The '94 Auction had some excellent buys.  
Don't miss this year's auction.

**PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS**

Harry Bachman, Auctioneer Annville, PA	Gary Mass, President Agri Careers Massena, IA
Abe Fisher, 1994 President Pennsylvania Pork Council Kinzer, PA	H. Louis Moore, Professor of Agricultural Economics Pennsylvania State University
Kirk Clark, Professor of Veterinary Medicine Purdue University West Lafayette, IN	Kenneth Winebark, Lebanon County Agent Pennsylvania State University
Tom Congelton Marketing Manager Central Kentucky Hog Marketing Association Springfield, KY	Dennis Zimmerman Producer, Member Nutrient Management Advisory Board Beaver Springs, PA
Kenneth Kephart, Assoc. Professor of Animal Science Pennsylvania State University	
Bruce Lemmon, Ag Education Instructor Cumberland Valley High School Carlisle, PA	

**"THE OTHER BURGER" WILL BE AVAILABLE FOR LUNCH**