Board Of Directors Reorganizes

UNIVERSITY PARK (Centre Co.) — The 1995 Pennsylvania Dairy Herd Improvement Association (Pa.DHIA) Board of Directors held a reorganizational meeting Wednesday at South Ridge Motor Inn in State College.

Elected to serve as its president was Lane Sollenberger, a member from Franklin County.

Sollenberger was elected to the state board of directors in April 1992 and has served on the Finance and Personnel Committee, as well as serving on the Pa.DHIA-Mideast Study Group.

In 1994, Sollenberger was elected to serve a secretary of the state board.

William Jackson, of Fayette County was elected vice president during the reorganizational meeting, while Dale Hoover, of Lebanon County was named treasurer, and Neal McCulloch, of Cumberland County, was named secretary.

Also elected to serve on the board's Executive Committee were John Wilcox, from Bradford County, who is to serve as a director-at-large.

Past president Frank Orner, of Clearfield County, was also asked to serve for another year on the committee.

Norm Hershey, of Lancaster County; was elected chairman of the Pa.DHIA Retirement Committee.

Other directors of the 1995 board include Bill Itle, of Cambria County; Steve Mowry, Bedford County; John Brodzina, of Huntingdon County; Ralph Gilkinson, of Erie County; Don Duncan, of Berks County; George Cudoc, of Butler County; John Castrogiavanni, of Susquehanna County; Mark Eby, of Sullivan County; Brooks Smith, of Perry County; Luke Rebuck, of Northumberland County; Marian Butler, of Tioga County; and Bill Jackson, of Fayette County.

For more information, contact a local director, or call Pa.DHIA at (814) 865-1517.

The members of the 1995 Pa. DHIA board of directors are, from left, front row, Lane Sollenberger, Bill Jackson, Neal McCullouch, Dale Hoover, John Wilcox, and Frank Orner. Second row, are John Castrogiavanni, Mark Eby, Brooks Smith, Luke Rebuck, and Marian Butler. Back row, are Bill Itle, Steve Mowry, John Brodzina, Ralph Gilkinson, Don Duncan, Norm Hershey, and George Cudoc.

Industry Trends, What Can We Do?

DAVID SLUSSER
General Manager

UNIVERSITY PARK (Centre Co.) — The dairy industry in Pennsylvania is facing rapid changes.

We can react to these changes and live with what happens, or we can plan for the future.

Let's first look at the "big picture" of world milk production, the trends of United States milk production, and trends in Northeastern dairy production.

We need to project what we feel will occur over the next 10 years in the Northeast, and how we can positively affect these trends for the benefit of the dairy farmer in the region.

World Markets

As the nations of the world develop their economic systems, consumption of milk and other dairy products will increase.

Milk is high in nutrition, especially proteins and calcium, and, because of new technology and management skills, is very efficiently produced.

The dairy cow is a very efficient source of complete protein, both from milk and beef, and is very adaptable to many different climates and geographic conditions.

Dairy cows can play a major role in soil erosion control, because of their ruminative nature they can digest a wide variety of forages, which include grasses. These forages blend well in crop rotation programs, and grow well on land not suited for row crop and food crop production.

Animal waste can be recycled to the benefit of the soil.

Presently, the United States holds the leadership position in dairy farm management skills, and in dairy cattle genetics.

New Zealand can produce milk cheaper than the United States, but only because of the climate — they can pasture dairy cattle yearround. However, the island is small and can only produce a limited portion of the dairy products needed by the world.

The next most abundant source of economically produced milk is the United States.

The adoption of GATT (General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade) hopefully will change the protectionist policies of Europe and Asia over the next 10 years. The United States government and the dairy industry need to work as partners to develop world markets for dairy products and dairy cattle genetics.

Our DHIA cooperatives must do their part to make sure our members will maintain this world leadership position in management skills and superior genetics.

National Trends

The dairy industry in the United States has changed over the last 10 years. Wisconsin is no longer the number one dairy state. California is.

Dairy cow numbers are growing the most in the Western and Southwestern states, while in the upper Midwest and in the Northeast they are declining.

Western dairy farmers can grow or purchase top quality forage from irrigated land, and their management skills are outstanding.

Cow numbers continue to decline nationwide, while milk production continues to increase.

Improving management skills, improving genetics and new technology (such as BST) will continue this change at an ever-increasing rate.

Because of our geographical location to the populations, Class I sales (fluid milk) will remain strong, however milk sales for processed products will depend on the competitive management skills of our producers.

Since most international sales will be processed dairy products, and since these products will continue to play a major part in dairy products sales in the Northeast, we in DHIA and other related industries must do whatever is necessary to help our dairy farmers with management tools and dairy cattle genetics.

DHIAs, artificial insemination organizations, dairy cattle breed associations, farm consultants, and financial institutions need to work together in non-traditional ways to provide Northeastern dairy farmers with the best tools possible at the least cost possible.

They have to work togther to combine their financial and human resources to make this region of the United States highly competitive, and a strong part of the world dairy picture.

By working together, we can lead into the future, and not react to it.

The move from government support programs to the free market economy will add speed and fuel to these changes.

Northeastern Trends

The Northeastern United States dairy industry appears to be faring better that the upper Midwest, however it is still losing ground to the West and Southwest.

The top five dairy states are California, Wisconsin, New York, Pennsylvania and Minnesota. As you see, two of those states are in the Northeast.

Cow numbers will continue to drop, however total milk production will probably continue to grow.

The milk-production advantages for this region are: one third of the U.S. population is located here; climate is favorable for milk production; terrain is more adaptable to forage production and grasses, and less to row crops and food crops; dairy farm management skills are outstanding; and the infrastructure of dairy farm support industries is strong.

Who Is That Heifer?

Larry W. Specht
Professor of Dairy Science
Penn State University

How often do dairy producers (and visitors) ask the question, "Who is the sire and/or dam of that good-looking heifer?" and then find that the information is missing from the herd records? Not often, if they utilize the cow and heifer identification reports available through DHIA.

DHIA organizations must be certified each year as to the quality of their lab, field, and processing center services. At least 95 percent of the animals in a herd must have permanent identification in order to maintain official status with the national DHIA program. Permanent identification is defined as: a breed association registration number or identification number, a metal standard series eartage, or a Verified Identification Program (VIP) number. These are in contrast to plastic tags, chain numbers, chalk, crayon or other removable identification.

Dairy records processing centers reduce missing permanent identification situations to an absolute minimum. This can be attributed to herds and DHIA technicians that report information accurately the first time. They also cooperate with the breed associations when verifying birthdates and parentage on registered animals.

There are many benefits to permanently identifying animals. These reasons begin with the need for an animal inventory and expand as dairy producers find reasons to track production, animal health, reproductive status, genetic evaluations, veterinary treatment, growth and animal location. Many herds participate in breed programs including registration, type evaluations and merchandising. Accurate identification becomes critical. On a broader scale, the AI industry, the Animal Improvement Programs Lab (AIPL) of the USDA as well as extension and research personnel need accurate records to provide a data base for the research and genetic evaluation needs of the U.S. dairy cattle population.

Participants at the recent National DHIA annual meeting held in Burlington, Vermont spend considerable time discussing a new approach to record evaluation. This revolutionary idea is still in the developmental stage but has evolved far enough to warrant discussion.

The key change is to stop evaluating cow and herd records on the basis of the name of the testing program, i.e., not to assume that DHIA 2X records are more accurate then A-P records or that A-P records are more reliable than records made in the Owner-Sampler program. Each type of record keeping program has always been accompanied by a host of rules and regulations designed to keep people from biasing on individual cows and herds. Rules and regulations work up to a point but are costly to enforce and almost ruinous to a DHIA affiliate if a lawsuit rears its ugly head.

The cow and herd profile approach is to describe the set of conditions under which the herd is tested and to let the end-user (AI, cattle buyer, breed association, etc.) decide for themselves if they are comfortable with the conditions under which a record or group of records was made. For example, records from many different herds on daughters of a progeny test sire would not be subject to the same standards as would be required for records on cows that are competing for production awards or records on a potential bull dam.

Some statistics that need to be kept on all herds would be: number of tests per year or per lactation; number of tests with component sampling; number of tests done by the DHIA technician and/or number of tests with data supplied by the dairyman. Other information would include the shape of the lactation curve on individual cows compared to the lactation curves on their contemporaries and the percentage of animals in the herd with permanent identification.

One interesting aspect of the herd profile is the plot of the deviations of individual cow records. Do the deviations follow a normal distribution or are there one or more cows with extremely large deviations? If there is a 60,000 pound milk record in a herd that averages 15,000 pounds per cow we might suspect that the cow received special treatment that was not available to the rest of the herd. One final note—herds must be willing to make an open disclosure of all information related to cow and herd profiles. Those who do not wish to do so should not expect to sell breeding stock to well informed buyers.

Herd and cow profiles will not be available on a routine basis for 12 to 18 months at the earliest but they will become a fact of life for DHIA and the dairy breeding industry.