

Penn State Block and Bridle Club

NOTES FROM THE PENN STATE BLOCK AND BRIDLE CLUB

This monthly feature to *Lancaster Farming* is provided by members of the Penn State Block and Bridle Club for B&B alumni, friends of the Department of Dairy and Animal Science, and the readership of *Lancaster Farming*.

September

September events included social, intramural, Ag Student Council, and livestock judging activities, which made for an extremely busy month for the Penn State Block and Bridle Club. A well-attended, regularly scheduled meeting kicked off the month followed by the annual fall picnic and an evening playing broomball.

Attendees at the picnic enjoyed a hamburger cookout, volleyball, and touch football on a Sunday afternoon at the Beef and Sheep Center. Two days later, members who still had enough energy showed up at the Penn State ice rink for a bruising, two-hour, hard-fought battle of broomball, leaving many participants exhausted and a few injured. Members had ample time to heal before another regular meeting, Ag Hill Olympics, and the beginning of two important seasons: intramural softball and livestock judging!

The regular meeting covered committee reports, national meeting details, and a program that consisted of summer internship experiences by students. Two days later, a four man team consisting of Jay Brehm, Scott Brown, Scott Myers, and Tadd Burch led Block & Bridle to a third place finish at the annual Ag Hill Olympics. Bale throwing, wheelbarrow racing,

and shelling corn by hand highlighted the day's events.

While the Nittany Lion football team struggled in a loss to Wisconsin, B&B teams had great starts to their respective seasons. The intramural men's softball team finished September undefeated with a record of 4-0, while the livestock judging team finished first at the Eastern National in Timonium, Md.

This year's livestock judging team, led by coach Keith Bryan, includes Kim Black, Jay Brehm, Scott Brown, Brian Hrutkey, Chris Kling, Brian McAllister, Todd Rabenold and Jen Sweitzer.

October

Unlike the Penn State football team that suffered another setback against Ohio State in October, the intramural softball team continued their winning ways until hitting a roadblock in the intramural championship semifinals.

Led by team co-captains Josh Molnar and Scott Myers, the team finished the season with a 6-1 record.

Club members assisted with the Keystone International Livestock Exposition's livestock judging contest. The club provided animal holders and movers for 12 classes of livestock throughout the morning judging session on Oct. 7.

Matt Zerby and Bill Beinlich, co-chairmen of the livestock committee, organized the club's efforts for this event.

Another regular meeting was held on Oct. 5 and included committee reports, finalizing plans for the National meeting, the start of the fall sausage sale, and speaker Fadok Shabi. Shabi, who talked about Israeli agriculture, is a Ph.D. student at Penn State and was graduated from the Hebrew University in Israel.

Members received word that one of the department's secretaries had to bear considerable "out-of-pocket" expenses for health care. The club "passed-the-hat" and collected more than \$200 to help defray costs of her health care. The annual B&B fall meeting sale has been expanded slightly to include three items: pork sausage and two sizes of beef summer sausage.

Two-pound packages of pork sausage are available for \$3.50, and the "beef sticks" are available in either small (\$3.50 for 14 ounces) or large (\$6.50 for 2 pounds) sizes. Any member of B&B would be happy to take your order. The incentives for this fall's sale include dinner for the winning team of five and complimentary

tickets to the Christmas semiformal for the two high salespersons.

Plans are under way to continue the busy semester schedule for club members. A new intramural season started recently for co-ed and men's flag football teams. On Saturday, Oct. 21, a few Executive Committee members will discuss B&B programs and undergraduate student life with juniors and seniors in high school who will be on campus for the annual Department of Dairy and Animal Science Open House for Prospective Students. The club is also planning a Halloween Party and pig roast on Oct. 28.

November

Finally, plans are coming together for club members to attend the 76th National Block and

Bridle Club Meeting in Louisville, Ky., from Nov. 9-12.

This year's National Meeting will be hosted by the University of Kentucky and will be held in conjunction with the North American International Livestock Exposition.

The meeting will be special since our very own Dr. Harold Harpster is up for election for national B & B secretary. Other events scheduled for later in the semester include the annual Christmas semiformal and trying to secure a stretch of highway in Centre County for Pennsylvania's Adopt-A-Highway program.

For more information concerning activities of the Penn State Block and Bridle Club, contact Keith Bryan at (814) 863-0569.

To Chop Or Not To Chop?

UNIVERSITY PARK (Centre Co.)—Now is the time when farmers are considering options for postharvest management of leftover cornstalks and other crop residue. And the question many are asking is, "To chop or not to chop?"

Before deciding whether to chop cornstalks or leave them intact, several factors should be considered, said Lynn Hoffman, senior research associate in Penn State's College of Agricultural Sciences.

Proper management of crop residue has become widely accepted as a means to reduce soil erosion. To keep as much residue as possible on fields, Hoffman generally recommends leaving cornstalks alone. If chopped, he said, the smaller pieces may be blown or washed away by wind or rain.

But there are circumstances in which chopping may be the best option. "If you plan to use secondary tillage equipment, such as a field cultivator or harrow, after planting in the spring, you'll probably want to chop the cornstalks," Hoffman said.

"A lot of secondary tillage tools don't have enough clearance to

allow those uncut stalks to pass through without plugging up the machinery," he said. "But if the stalks won't present a problem with secondary tillage, I'd recommend you leave them alone."

If you use a corn-picker to harvest your corn, cutting the stalks also might help to distribute the material more uniformly over the field. "But if you use a combine," said Hoffman, "it usually will shred the stalks enough to give you reasonably uniform distribution without chopping them."

Some farmers who chop their cornstalks in the fall perform some type of tillage operation to partially cover the cut stalks and keep them in place. But Hoffman said there are risks in that practice. "You have to be careful that you don't violate the conservation plan assigned to the farm or to that par-

ticular field," he said. "You have to be aware of and follow normal erosion control measures."

Hoffman said some farmers chop cornstalks thinking that it will help control insects such as corn borers. But he said that's not necessarily true. "We've never been able to demonstrate that chopping the stalks reduces the number of insects enough to have an effect on next year's production."

If you plan to use a no-till drill to plant alfalfa or oats in the early spring, then you are better off not cutting leftover cornstalks, according to Hoffman. "When there's still a little frost and the stalks are stuck fast to the ground, you get less plugging of the no-till drill when the stalks are left intact," he said.

Northeast Ag Program Looks For Innovative Ideas

BURLINGTON, Vt.—Applications are available for The Northeast Region Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) Program's 1996 Farmer/Grower Grants Program. The region will award up to \$100,000 in grants to farmers to try innovative production and marketing systems.

The grants will be awarded on a competitive basis to farmers throughout the 12-state region. Projects may involve small research trials, educational activities and demonstrations. Project activities should promote good stewardship of natural resources,

prevent agricultural pollution, improve farm profitability and/or enhance quality of life.

Last year, 38 grants were awarded. They ranged in size from \$325 to \$5,571. Grants must be under the direction of at least one producer, although collaboration with other producers and other members of the agricultural community is strongly encouraged.

Grant applications are available from the Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education Program, Hill Building, University of Vermont, Burlington, Vt., 05405-0082. Application deadline is December 15, 1995.

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