

USDA Field Team Wins National Hammer Award

VERNON ACHENBACH JR.
Lancaster Farming Staff
HARRISBURG (Dauphin Co.) — A five-person team that provides field veterinary services in eastern Pennsylvania for the U.S. Department of Agriculture Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (USDA APHIS) received the nation's Hammer Award last Friday.

The Hammer Award is an honor established by Vice President Al Gore to recognize outstanding efforts by government workers who help change government from a wasteful bureaucracy into a streamlined, efficient customer service-first organization.

More specifically, the award is called the "Hammer" because it is to symbolize the smashing of old government ways of handling the people's business in favor of creating fast, efficient and low cost ways to serve the people's business needs.

Team members receiving the award included leader Dr. Debbie Hawkins, and members Ms. Beth Wittenbrader, Tom Schoelzel, Dr. Amy Nesselrodt, and Tim Brennan.

Agriculture for Marketing and Regulatory Programs Michael V. Dunn traveled from Washington to personally present the awards.

Dunn presented the award noting the achievements of the team.

The story behind the award is one of significant change in government — it was brought about by a desire from Hawkins and the others who had been her supervised employees to become more efficient and beneficial to the people who need their services, and it was allowed by those higher up the chain of command, a delegation of authority atypical for government.

According to Hawkins, the team concept was allowed as a pilot program after she got approval from her superiors to go forward with having the team redesign the basic structure of the field operations and areas of responsibility.

With the support of Dr. Ulysses Lane, the area veterinarian in charge at the time (currently serving in that capacity in Florida), and Dr. William Buisch, northern regional director, the Eastern Pennsylvania Veterinary Service Field Team was created as a pilot project in 1992.

The original team met first in August 1992, according to Hawkins, and consisted of herself and the two animal health technicians whom she supervised. Wittenbrader was one of the two original technicians.

Later, in 1993, Schoelzel, an animal identification coordinator joined the team followed by Tim Brennan, an animal health technician.

Hawkins said the team drew up a mission statement based on APHIS mission statement, the mission statement for the Northeast Region, the anticipated needs of internal and external customers and "the taxpayers' right to cost-effective customer service."

In short, what the group managed to do was significantly reduce the cost of its service to the public, achieve 100 percent and faster processing of permits for the importation and exportation of animal products under their purview, and beefed up its ability to catch disease.

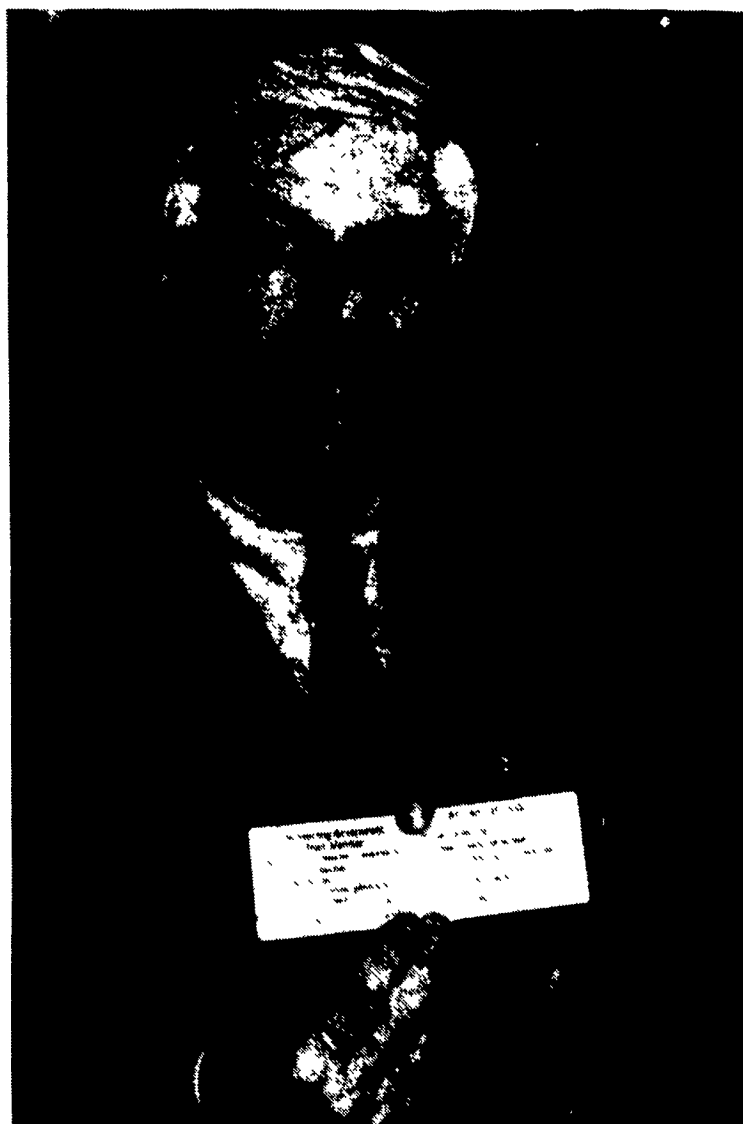
Dunn presented the award, and said that he was very proud to have done so.

He was sworn into his appointed office Dec. 28, having served as

acting undersecretary for rural economic and community development, and also as an admini-

strator of the USDA Farmers Home Administration.

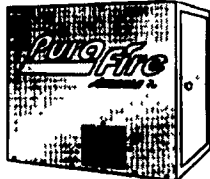
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U.S. Assistant Secretary of Agriculture for Marketing and Regulatory Programs Michael V. Dunn displays official reinventing government and regulation cards, which outline goals of changing government — putting customers first (taxpayers) and eliminating red tape and waste.

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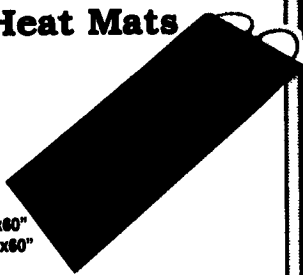
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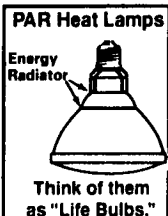


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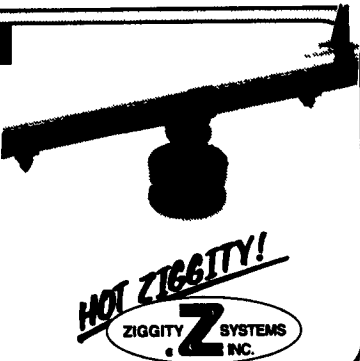
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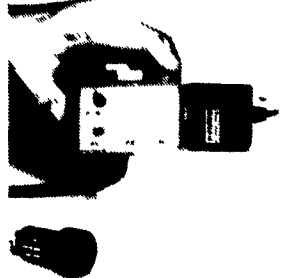
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