

Lady Bugs Can Be Beneficial

UNIVERSITY PARK (Centre Co.) — As spring arrives, many Pennsylvanians are bracing for an onslaught of foreign insect invaders — Asian lady beetles. But despite the temptation, you shouldn't kill these benign and even beneficial bugs.

"In the last few years, multicolored Asian lady beetles have caused quite a stir," said Steven Jacobs, extension entomologist in Penn State's College of Agricultural Sciences. "Although they can be a nuisance, they do far more good than harm."

A native of eastern Asia, the beetle was introduced into the United States by the U.S. Department of Agriculture as a biological control agent. The tree-dwelling insect can live up to three years and is a voracious predator of aphids, scale insects, and other pests. Adults of the species were first observed in Pennsylvania in 1993.

At 9/32 of an inch long and 7/32 of an inch wide, these beetles are oval or convex and slightly larger than native lady beetles. They are yellow to red in color, with or without as many as 19 black spots on the wing covers. The head is usually concealed beneath a disk-shaped "collar," which is cream to yellow in color with a black 'M' design in the center.

Asian lady beetles become a nuisance when they invade homes in search of shelter and warmth. "Starting around September, these insects will begin to congregate on windows, doors and porch decks, seeking sites to overwinter," said

Jacobs. "If they have entered your house, you may not notice them until temperatures begin to rise in the spring. After a few warm, sunny days, they emerge from their hiding spots in search of an exit."

The presence of Asian lady beetles in large numbers can lead to near hysteria among some homeowners. Despite the nuisance the beetles can cause, they do not bite, sting, carry human diseases, or feed on wood, clothing, or food.

"Mechanical exclusion seems to be the best way to keep them out of your house," said Jacobs. "Seal cracks and openings around windows, doors, siding, utility

pipes and chimneys with silicone or silicone-latex caulk. Repair or replace damaged screens. Cover attic vents and fireplace chimneys with number 20 or smaller screen mesh.

"If beetles are already in your house, use a broom and dust pan or vacuum cleaner to remove

them" Jacobs said. "But because they're very beneficial in controlling damaging pests, they should be released unharmed in a protected area outside."

For a free fact sheet on multicolored Asian lady beetles, contact the Penn State Cooperative Extension office in your county.

NFO Submits Testimony To Committee

AMES, Iowa — On Monday, March 25, The National Farmers Organization (NFO) voiced its concern about vertical integration in the livestock industry to the USDA's Advisory Committee on Agricultural Concentration.

In written testimony, NFO President Gene Paul focused on the need to resist the current trend in packer industry concentration and to maintain a marketplace that is fair, open, and competitive.

"We view recent developments with great concern because three or four meatpacking firms control a large percentage of the market. The vertical integration continues by many of these same firms owning or contracting livestock production facilities, which can adversely affect market prices and fair access," Paul said.

Paul explains that as competition is eliminated in purchasing of fed cattle, hogs and sheep, the negative influence also affects prices for feeders and breeding stock.

NFO represents independent livestock producers nationwide who adopted the following resolution which supports:

*Legislative effort that would restrict anticompetitive mergers and acquisitions.

*More attentive surveillance of the packing industry by the justice department and others with responsibility for administration of the anti-trust laws.

*Continuation of the independent administration of the Packers and Stockyards Act to investigate market irregularities.

*Retaining and strengthening the present authority contained in the Packers and Stockyards Act to investigate market irregularities.

*Enforcement of legislation restricting large integrated corporate livestock operations which adversely affect rural communities and create environmental pollution, and requiring that all large confinement entities be bonded and financially responsible for environmental damage and subsequent cleanup.

"The United States Department of Agriculture, through the Packers and Stockyards Act of 1921 has set a precedent for appropriate enforcement of section 202," Paul

said. "Section 202 states in part that it is unlawful to engage in any course of business with the effect of manipulating or controlling prices, or creating a monopoly in the acquisition of, buying, or selling."

Paul further stated that failure to act will result in the further industrialization of American

agriculture and the more rapid demise of independent producers.

While Americans have never experienced serious concerns about food security, National Farmers is concerned whether control of America's food supply by three or four multinational corporations is in the best interest of consumers.

Agricultural Drivers Exempt During Growing Season

HARRISBURG (Dauphin Co.) — Truck drivers transporting agricultural commodities or farm supplies in Pennsylvania have been granted a permanent exemption on maximum driving time during the growing and harvesting seasons, according to Agriculture Secretary Charles C. Brosius.

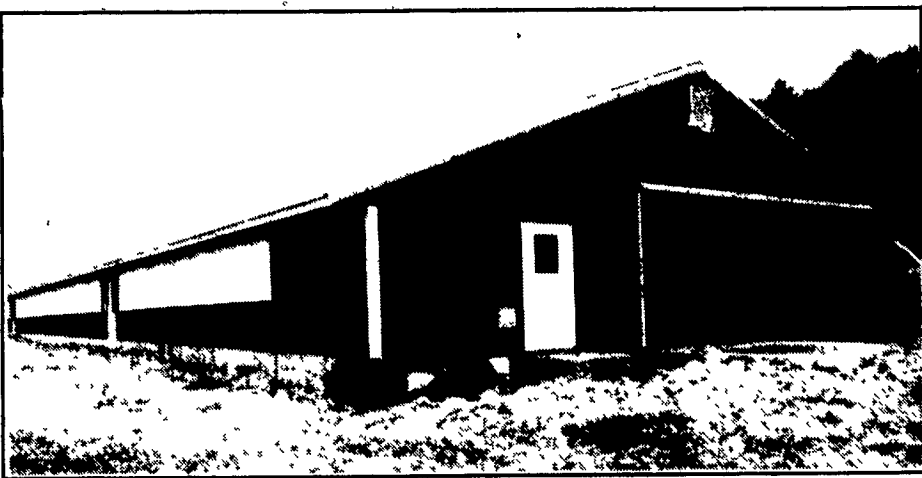
"We have worked closely with the Department of Transportation in providing this regulatory relief under provisions of the National Highway Safety Act, and the exemption will bring important economic benefits to Pennsylvania's agricultural industry," Brosius said.

The "planting and harvesting season" in Pennsylvania has been designated as March 1 through Nov. 30 for the purposes of the exemption. Drivers are allowed to extend their driving hours within a 100-mile radius of the source of the commodities or the distribution point for the farm supplies.

Brosius noted that the exemption will mean increased profitability for farmers because it will allow for a freer and more timely flow of commodities to market during critical harvest periods. It will also allow the delivery of important supplies to farms throughout the planting and growing season.

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