

Ag Industry Coalition Forms To Fight For Vet School Funds

VERNON ACHENBACH JR.
Lancaster Farming Staff
HARRISBURG (Dauphin Co.) — Pennsylvania's agriculture industry is again joining forces to persuade the state governor that his proposal to cut funding to the University of Pennsylvania School of Veterinary Medicine is detrimental to the state's agriculture industry, to the health of its residents and the economy, and to the political career of the governor.

increase is actually a decrease and will actually see the College and Extension be forced to continue its decline in staff and services.

The lack of maintenance-level funding for essential agricultural and related educational and research support in comparison to a large proposed increase in state spending on expanding the prison system has been held up by some as incomprehensible.

In his budget address, Gov. Ridge said, "This budget includes \$62.2 million for the continued expansion of our prison system. Some in the Capitol will criticize this expenditure. Most Pennsylvanians will not. Those who murder, assault and rape our neighbors must be put away."

Ridge said that he proposed the budget in consideration of an anticipated federal shortfall of \$600 million, and assuming that state economic growth and therefore state tax revenue growth will be slow.

Ridge's plan is to deal realistically with the state's economic situation by limiting the amount of taxes collected and limiting the funds spent, in order to allow private investment opportunities and the creation of jobs to follow.

the school to the state had been established and such debilitating reductions as Ridge has suggested would no longer be proposed.

Speakers included several legislators active in agricultural affairs including Rep. Raymond Bunt, R-Montgomery, majority chairman of the House Agriculture and Rural Affairs Committee, and Sen. Edward Madigan, R-Williamsport, majority chairman of the Senate Agriculture and Rural Affairs Committee.

Legislator-farmer Rep. Art Hershey, R-Chester County, also spoke out in support of the school.

Other speakers were Dr. Alan Kelly, dean of the School of Veterinary Medicine, Barry Stupine, associate dean and director of the Small Animal Hospital, and other heads of different areas under the overview of the School.

A last speaker was Dr. Sherbyn W. Ostrich, president of the American Veterinary Association, also a 1963 alumnus of the School.

"This is the best veterinary school in the world," he told the group, capping and supporting the statements of those directly involved with the school that otherwise could be seen cynically as merely self-serving.

However, the facts are that Gov. Ridge has targeted exporting manufactured goods and agricultural products, along with strengthening the tourist industry as key to revitalizing the state's economy.

The School of Veterinary Medicine is integral to Pennsylvania's tripartite system under the state Animal Health Diagnostic Commission.

This just-coming to strength system involves the state Department of Agriculture and its under-construction new testing laboratory in Harrisburg, the Pennsylvania State University and its diagnostic laboratories and reference libraries (it has the largest collection of E. coli bacteria in the world so that those concerned with

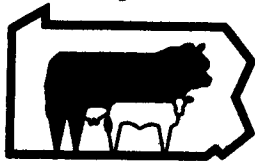
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On Wednesday at the Pennsylvania Chamber of Commerce and Industry Building in Harrisburg, located adjacent to the state Capitol Building, an ad hoc committee of the state's agricultural industry leadership met to review with legislators the effects of Gov. Tom Ridge's proposed 27-percent cut in state funding for the institution.

Ridge had proposed a state budget that reduced taxes and seeks cuts in most all spending. As an example, of all the spending proposed for education, only Penn State University's College of Agricultural Sciences and Extension received proposals for increased spending.

However, even that level of

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An open letter to cattle producers

I have heard numerous comments from neighbors, and others involved in the cattle industry, expressing concern about the possible effects the British BSE (Mad Cow Disease) epidemic may have on American demand for beef, especially as we approach the summer grilling season.

As you know, there have been no reported cases of BSE in the United States. Since 1985, no beef has been imported from the U.K., and since 1989, no British cattle or sheep have been imported in the United States. Despite these facts, the issue has continued to fester within the media and among consumers.

As Chairman of the Pennsylvania Beef Council, I have been in close contact with office staff who, in cooperation with the National Cattlemen's Beef Association, have been closely monitoring and proactively addressing the issue.

Within Pennsylvania, your Beef Council staff members have conducted interviews with key consumer media outlets throughout the state to reassure consumers of the safety and wholesomeness of American beef. Background information has also been distributed to leading retailers and foodservice outlets across the Commonwealth. Additionally, the office has fielded numerous consumer inquiries, and has sent information to leading food and health reporters. Our message has been simple: "Cattlemen have two responsibilities: one is to protect cattle from preventable diseases, and the other is to provide a safe and wholesome product for consumers. American cattlemen are accomplishing both."

The Beef Council has coordinated its efforts closely with the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture, who in turn, have been in contact with the Pennsylvania Department of Health, to ensure a consistent, positive response.

Current depressed cattle prices have created a sense of anxiety among many of us. Anticipated large fed cattle market levels, and a quickly approaching crucial summer grilling season have added to the concerns of British BSE issue may have on our local beef market. As a producer, like yourself, I share in your concerns but I take comfort in knowing that our Beef Council is working overtime to address the issue while at the same time laying plans for the most extensive summer beef promotion ever conducted within the state.

I provide this information to you with the intention of keeping you as a producer, and beef checkoff investor, informed. If you have further questions, please don't hesitate to contact myself, or the Beef Council office (717-545-6000).

Sincerely

Robert Gabel

Robert Gabel
PA Beef Council Chairman



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