

Three Complete Field Training

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Training Coordinator

STATE COLLEGE (Centre Co.) — Three people recently completed field training to further their education in serving as a technician for the Pennsylvania Dairy Herd Improvement Association.

Jim LeClair, of New York, Debbie Hart of Mercer County, and Steve Crowley, of New York completed a five-day field training seminar last week. The training is one of several steps in Pa.DHIA training procedures.

Before attending the five-day field training seminar, all new technicians receive initial training, which involves working directly

with an appointed trainer from Pa.DHIA.

In the initial training, all aspects of the testing procedures are covered, as well as developing familiarity with a laptop computer.

The overview of responsibilities, sample handling, and equipment procedures are covered in depth.

Pa.DHIA considers on-the-farm training important and newly hired technicians are accompanied by a trainer who explains how the technician is to perform in each of three methods of milking cows — by parlor, pipeline, and bucket.

At this first training, practical situations are covered, such as

managing a circuit and recognizing a rule infraction.

Much time is spent on how technicians are expected to handle certain situations that may arise while conducting field duties, with an ever-present commitment to establish and maintain an easy and reliable link for communication between clients, staff and administration.

As the trainee completes two weeks of employment, the trainer again provides another round of training for the technician.

This second layer of training involves having the trainer be together with the relatively inexperienced technician at six different herds. The trainer evaluates performance and determines if additional basic training is needed.

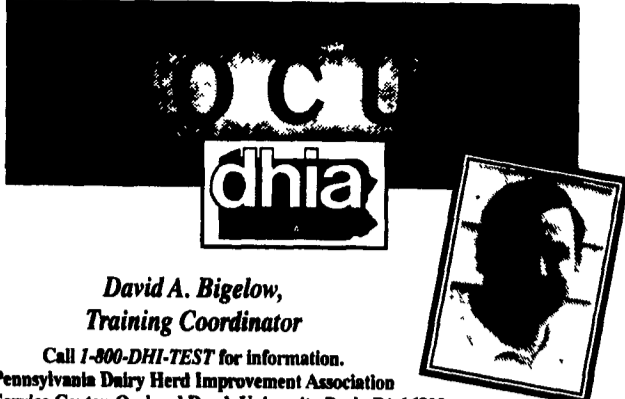
The five-day field training seminar follows shortly after the two-week evaluation.

A span of time between training sessions is built into the system to allow more real-world experiences for the technician, from which questions can be developed. It also allows time for development of communication skills between Pa.DHIA staff and the client dairymen on the circuit.

The field training seminar covers aspects of more advanced technician responsibilities and additional services available through Pa.DHIA.

Involved are such things as learning in-depth the Pa.DHIA Quick Barn Sheet on the laptop computer. A special emphasis of the training is put on the correct use of the computer, as well as having each technician become familiar with each of the options available.

The correct procedure for start-



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Call 1-800-DHI-TEST for information.
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ing a new herd, handling split herds, technician professionalism and circuit management are among some of the many different subjects covered, along with dealing with unusual or unanticipated barn situations.

An in-depth study of feed and forage is also taught, along with the different formulas needed to calculate milk price.

Special emphasis is placed on using the laptop computer during field training.

Technicians participating in field training also get a tour of the Pa.DHIA sample and meter laboratory to familiarize technicians with the general operations of the cooperative organization.

Learning how PTAs (predicted transmitting abilities, a term to describe the potential genetic "strength" of a pedigree animal's traits) are read, and interpreting the member-client's reports are a high priority goal for the week of technician training. Each report a dairy farmer receives is analyzed and reviewed in depth.

Additional topics covered during this field training include handling the documents and record cal-

culations for cows transferred in-state and out-of-state. Time is specifically set aside for each technician to learn the Pa.DHIA heifer management program and how to fill out the reports.

At the end of the five-day seminar, a certification exam is given to each technician to evaluate whether or not additional training may be warranted.

After six months employment, technicians are evaluated by the manager of the region in which the technician works. The evaluation is conducted by a visit to a farm while the technician is conducting testing. It is determined then if the technician is capable of continuing with limited supervision.

After that, technicians are evaluated on an annual basis, with input from members being served on the technician's circuit. This is done by giving each member a questionnaire to complete.

This information, as well as input from the region manager is used to determine what additional training or help a particular technician may need.

For more information about Pa.DHIA, call (800) DHI-TEST.

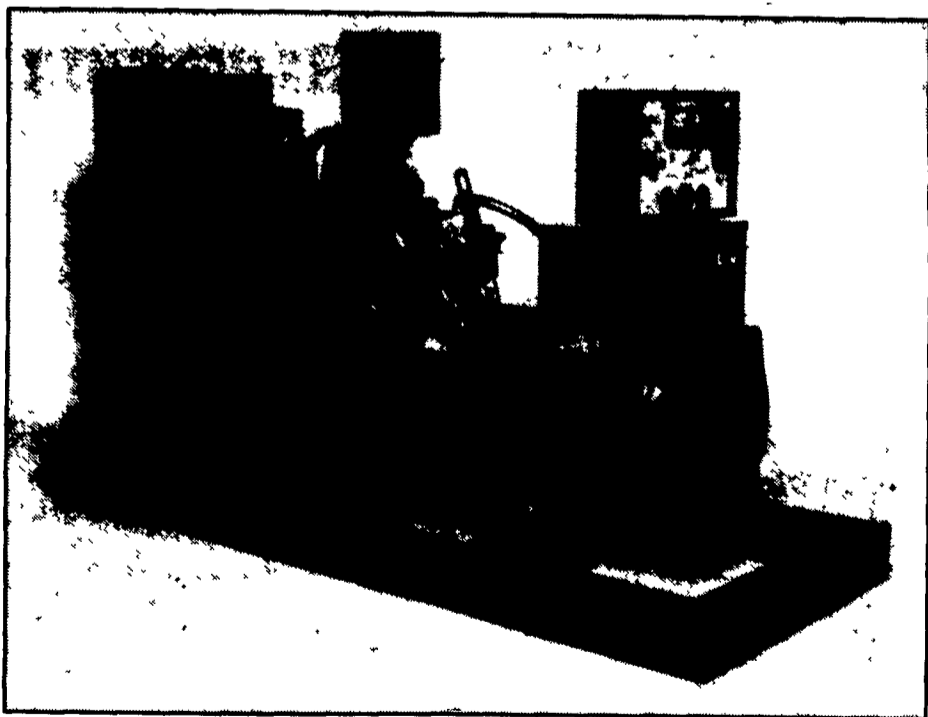


Graduates of Pa.DHIA field training are, from the left, Jim LaClair, Debbie Hart and Steve Crowley.

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