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into a concrete J-bunk for the cattle. In the barn, four pens hold about 100 head. Compared to the bank barn, there is a lot more room for cattle and operators.

Dan McFarland, Penn State ag engineer and moderator of the producer panel, noted that the Edwin Hoover farm in Ephrata built an addition to a bank barn, measuring 100 foot wide and extending out to about 54 feet. The addition accommodates the 200 head of cattle that Hoover finishes per year.

Three pens are supplied by a belt feeder. The facility has an open ridge for ventilation.

McFarland examined some of the basics needed by producers who intend to expand their facilities as part of the Cattle Feeder's Day. The chairman of the Penn State University animal Housing Committee spoke about the need to provide adequate cattle space and ventilation.

Marketing Trends

Jim Johnson, with the feeder calf marketing program at the Virginia Cattlemen's Association, spoke about the marketing efforts of the association, which handles 150,000 head per year.

The association, established in 1953, markets the standard 50,000-pound tractor-trailer loads to a variety of buyers. The seasonal business relies on advanced purchasing. Contracting is something the association will be looking at in years to come.

When producers buy loads of the feeder cattle, Johnson indicated they need to know the following:

- What vaccinations the cattle have had.
- How the cattle will perform in the feedlot.
- How well the cattle will hang on the rail.

The biggest problem facing producers and the industry, the cattlemen's representative noted, is the lack of "shared information." For competitive or other reasons, "no one wants to tell anybody how their cattle did," he said.

"If we want to make any advancements in the industry, folks, we have to tell each other how our cattle are doing," Johnson said.

Johnson spoke about the new buzzword — "alliances" — and what they'll mean to the industry.

There are different types of alliances: company-driven and producer-driven. The producer-

driven alliances work to maintain producer independence and decision-making.

Hank Maxey, feeder calf producer from Chatham, Va., sells calves from his 230-cow Angus herd near the North Carolina line.

They use proven AI sires (½ to ¾ Angus) and grow about 150 acres of tobacco.

The whole goal of their Angus program is provide a cow that will work at home to provide a steer for producers "that will work in the industry," said Maxey.

In the past, the farm made use of proven Angus bulls. But in the past 10 years, the company has switched to AI-proven Angus bulls. The carcass EPDs on the sires show a wide array of important genetic data, including their prospective carcass weights, yearling weight, and other information. This data can go a long way to allow consistency in the feeder herd so they will "feed, grow, look, and kill the same," said Maxey. "I hope that's what we are all looking at."

It's important for the producer to know the genetics of the feeder calves they buy and how they will feed and cut.

1998 Projections

While 1997 had the third largest

U.S. corn crop on record at 9.37 billion bushels and the largest soybean harvest at 2.73 billion bushels, carryovers this year will be dangerously small.

Yet animal production units are expected to increase, even with the projected grain carryover of 900 million bushels as of Sept. 1 this year. That equates to about a five-week supply of grain for all industries.

The scary part: it will take 250 million more bushels of corn just to feed the amount of additional animal units projected for the year, according to H. Louis Moore, Penn State economist, at the Cattle Feeder's Day.

Moore provided his economic forecast to the feeders at the day-long conference at the Farm and Home Center.

Although the country is experiencing the seventh year of continued economic growth without recession, and consumer confidence is up and unemployment is at near-ideal conditions ("everybody who wants a job has one," Moore said), there are some negative aspects to the economy. One is the Asian financial crisis, which could have big impact on the U.S., hurting export markets in general. Consumer debt, especially credit

card debt, continues to rise.

And how long can the growth continue?

Of the billions of bushels of corn produced in 1997, 5.63 billion goes to feed, 1.77 to food and alcohol uses, and 1.93 goes to exports. However, production is not increasing enough to match uses, Moore noted. Wheat carryover will be 655 million bushels and soybeans about 255 million bushels.

Moore noted that if the El Nino weather phenomenon produces a wet spring and a dry summer, "we're in big trouble," because carryovers could drop drastically.

U.S. beef inventory before Jan. 1 1998 was 34.27 million, continuing a trend of decreasing numbers. Total cow (including dairy and beef) numbered 108.8 million head, and numbers will show a further drop in 1998, Moore indicated.

Beef cow inventory as of July 1 last year was 34.7 million head. The calf inventory will continue to drop during the next several years.

The country exports about two billion pounds of beef and imports about 2.6 billion pounds. We're

closing the gap, he noted. However, we import no poultry products. About 4.75 billion pounds of broilers, or about 16-18 percent of total production, goes to exports. Turkey is exported to the tune of 575 million pounds per year, mostly dark meat to Russia and China.

Of the total U.S. meat production, beef will decrease by 2 percent at 24.8 billion pounds. Pork and broilers will both be up 7 percent. Broilers are projected to see production up 29 billion pounds and pork about 18.5 billion pounds. Total meat will be up 4 percent at 79 billion pounds.

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