

Penn State Major Explores Ecology-Based Agriculture

UNIVERSITY PARK (Centre Co.) — A dairy operation in a once rural county is surrounded by houses as a result of recent development. Urbanization has driven up the cost of operation.

New legislation requires a nutrient management plan. The neighbors are concerned about odors, flies, and potential soil erosion into nearby streams. How might the farm address these problems and still have a viable business?

A new major in Penn State's College of Agricultural Sciences, involving the departments of agronomy, entomology, horticulture, and plant pathology, will prepare students to answer such questions. In December, the Agroecosystems Science (AGESS) major was approved and will begin accepting students immediately.

"Many times a student will take courses in various disciplines, such as plant production, soils, pathology or economics, but never really see how each discipline fits into the total picture," said Elwood Hatley, professor of agronomy and program coordinator. "Our effort in this major is to keep

it holistic — to continually enforce the idea that we're working in a system."

Potential employers are very positive about the major, which offers options in plant science and integrated crop management (ICM). Graduates from the plant science option will be prepared for careers in agricultural and environmental education or policy development, and industrial research. They also will be well-prepared for graduate school.

Graduates of the ICM option will be prepared for careers in environmental and agricultural consulting, agribusiness, sustainable

agricultural production, environmental and agricultural education and advocacy, and governmental policy, regulatory and enforcement agencies.

"For entry level positions, employers are looking for students with experience over a broad spectrum," said Hatley. "We've focused on the courses and activities that the industry has told us are important." AGESS is the first major in the College of Agricultural Sciences that requires two internships for graduation, one related to field activities and one with an agribusiness or ag-related

department of government.

In fall 1998, the college will begin offering the new AGESS courses, which will be taught by multidisciplinary teams. Students will build on information learned in previous courses by using such technologies as "expert systems," computer programs that emulate the way a human expert would think through a problem. "We haven't used expert systems this way in a class before and we're very interested in how it works out," Hatley said.

The culminating course, Integrated Crop Management, will be taught using case studies devel-

oped around actual situations where individuals had to make decisions. "This course is designed after the Harvard Business School's MBA program," said Hatley. "Many medical schools also are using this technique to help interns and residents think about whole systems and the factors that come into play when practicing health care."

For more information about the AGESS major, write to the Department of Agronomy, 116 Agricultural Sciences and Industries Building, University Park, PA 16802, or call (814) 865-6541.

Northeastern Farm Credit Directors Begin New Term

LEWISBURG (Union Co.) — Re-elected directors from Northeastern Farm Credit, ACA began their new three-year term on Jan. 1. Director elections are held in October following the annual stockholder meetings in September.

Richard Kreibel, Benton, is beginning his 17th year on the board of directors for Northeastern representing the Bloomsburg area

comprised of Columbia, Luzerne, and Montour counties. He also serves on the board of directors for AgFirst Farm Credit Bank. He is a former chairman of the Columbia County and Benton Township Planning Committee as well as a former district officer and delegate for Atlantic Dairy Cooperative (Land O'Lakes).

Robert H. Whipple, Towanda, is beginning his 16th year on the

board representing the Towanda area comprised of Bradford and Sullivan counties. He owns a dairy operation and participates on the Sire Power Advisory Council and the Agway County Committee and serves as Susquehanna County DHIA Committee chairman.

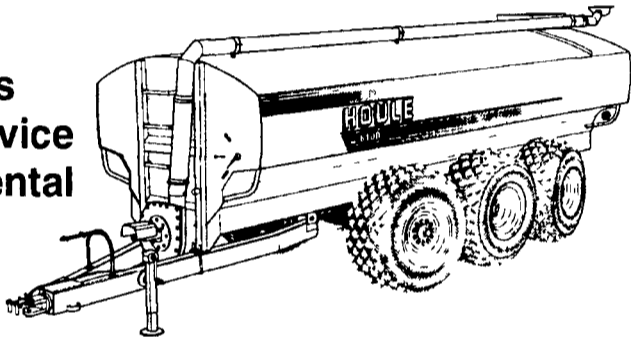
Ken O. Teel, Meshoppen, is beginning his 4th year on the board representing the Tunkhannock area comprised of Lackawanna,

Susquehanna, Wayne, and Wyoming counties. He owns a dairy operation and sells seed for Hoffman Seeds and Beachley-Hardy Hytest Seed. He serves as Susquehanna County DHIA Committee chairman and Wyoming County Farm Bureau director.

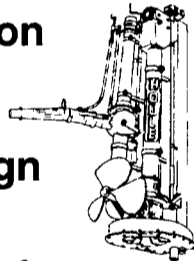
Herman Bishop, Roaring Branch, is beginning his 4th year on the board. He is representing the Wellsboro area which is made up of Tioga County. He owns a dairy operation and is a director for the Pennsylvania Farm Bureau, where he also serves as vice president.

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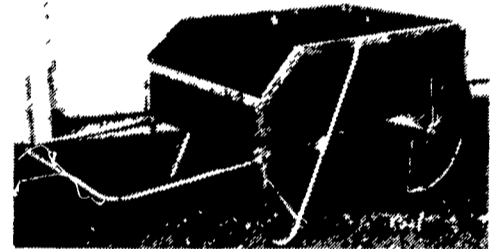


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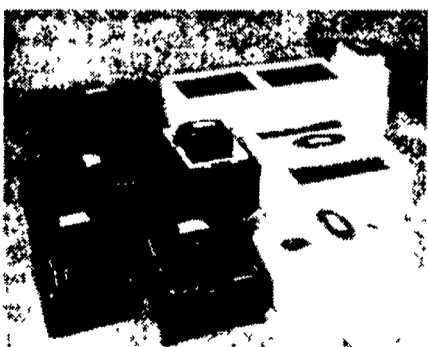
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