

Pa. State Grange Prepares To Tackle Issues

(Continued from Page A37)

Fears have arisen that perhaps formalization of the volunteer program would provide volunteers with some state authority that could override the rights of landowners against trespass.

According to Courtney, "The ag community seems to have several questions about the program. Who is liable if there is damage to the farm, or if the citizen is hurt on the premises?"

"What recourse does a landowner have if they say, 'No trespassing,' and the monitor goes on the private land anyway?"

"What happens to the data when it is collected, and what happens if the data is collected to further a vendetta against the landowner (such as a hog, dairy, poultry or feedlot operation that is unpopular with a residential neighbor)?"

"The Grange feels it needs to formulate policy on the issue and will take a serious look at it at the state convention..." he said.

Another issue of the Subcommittee is the condition of landfills in Pennsylvania.

(As an aside, according to a report this week, Pennsylvania accepts 25 percent of the nation's states' exported waste into its landfills. With proximity to the East Coast megalopolis, and the lack of proper planning by the other states' cities for waste management, Pennsylvanians can make more money using a farm as a landfill than for food production.)

According to Courtney, "Gov. Tom Ridge has put a moratorium on new landfills and expansion permits, and has asked for the legislative imposition of a three-year freeze on new permits. The Grange plans to discuss this issue in depth at the convention," he said.

Paul Dawson, chairman of the state Grange Governmental Issues Committee, talked about three issues of concern for the committee — consumer protection against misleading solicitations to purchase goods hidden in so-called "sweepstakes by mail" programs; achieving a lawsuit abuse reform act to discourage the waste in money and time on frivolous lawsuits; and providing some statewide competency and consistency with regards to local enforcement of the laws regarding the use of farm vehicle license plates.

"Does the American public have the protection it needs to guard against mail and phone solicitations and from those who prey on innocent citizens? Should we support tightening the laws against fraudulent or near-fraudulent sweepstakes?" Dawson asked.

He said that with a potential Lawsuit Abuse Reform Act, "... there is not an official draft ... because the General Assembly is not going to introduce it until the next legislative session.

"However, the Grange will look at developing policy at this convention (Oct. 22-28) so that the legislative director will have a clear position to represent the Grange ..."

Barbar Gross, chairman of the State Grange Family Issues Committee, said there were four issues of concern: school violence; a proposal to the state Public Utility Commission by a group of 20 small telephone companies to have their rates increase made automatically through a tie with the inflation index; the lack of required credentials for those home-schooling children and the lack of confirmatory testing, and consistency in rules (they vary from school district to school district); and the lack of telecommunications equipment in rural areas

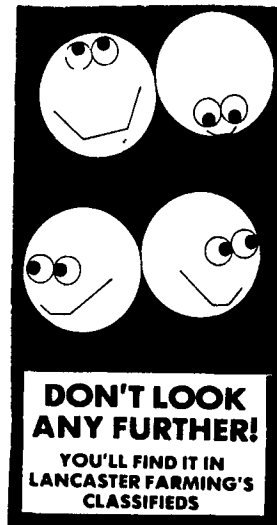
for students to be able to take advantage of long distance learning opportunities granted by U.S. Congress in the Telecommunications Act of 1996.

Robert Sattazahn, chairman of the Dairy Committee reported that resolutions on tap for the convention delegates to consider call for even stronger support for a vaccination program for the eradication

of Johne's Disease, as well as an indemnity program for farmers who cull cattle due to the disease.

"The Pennsylvania State Grange has been in the forefront of

Johne's Disease research work in Pennsylvania for the last 15 years, and will continue to do so until a vaccination is developed in the future," Sattazahn said.



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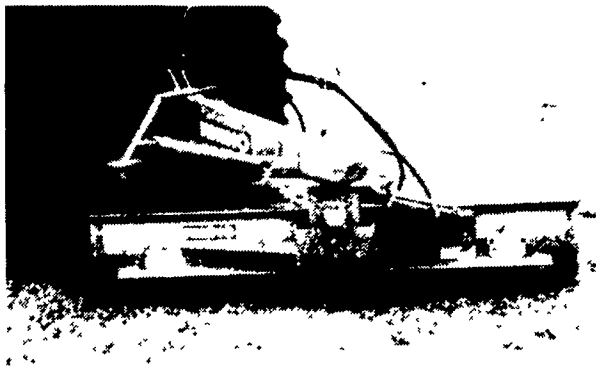
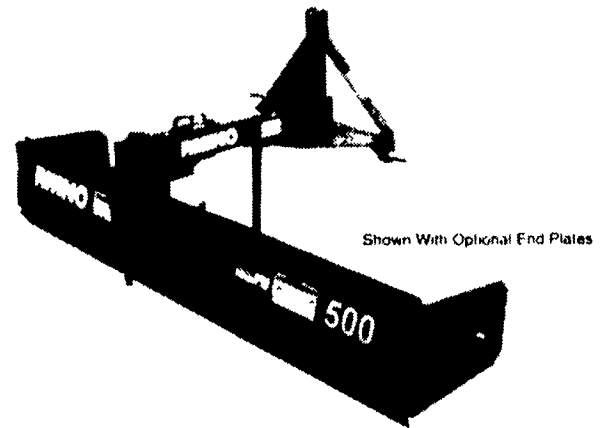
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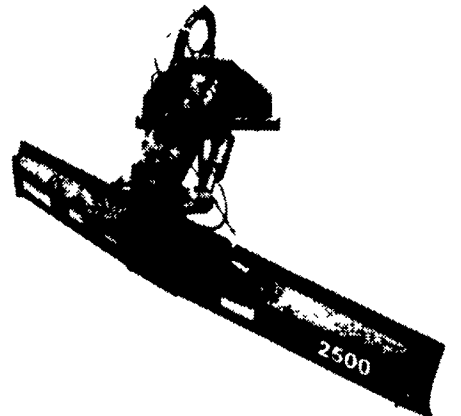


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