

Conference To Help Restructure Ohio's Dairy Industry

COLUMBUS, Ohio — Without specialization, the old saying "jack of all trades, but master of none" holds true in the dairy industry, said Tom Noyes, dairy agent at the Wayne County office of Ohio State University Extension.

Dairy producers who try to harvest forage, raise heifers, be a mechanic, and do other things while also milking cows, never get all those things done to their fullest potential, Noyes said. They're just fragmenting their management efforts without doing the best job they can at any one of those things.

"That's why we're talking about specialization. You improve your skills as you specialize," he said. "In Western states, dairy producers who milk cows, just milk cows."

Noyes is one of three speakers who will discuss dairy specialization at the inaugural "Ohio Dairy Conference, Restructuring Ohio's Dairy Industry," to be held Dec. 8-9 at the Ramada University Hotel and Conference Center on Olentangy River Road just north of Ohio State University's main campus in Columbus.

With specialization, producers who like the dairy industry but don't really enjoy milking cows can find other ways to be involved, Noyes said. For example, they can grow forage or feed, raise replacement heifers or provide another contracted service or product for producers who specialize in milking.

"Dan Undersander of the University of Wisconsin, who will speak during the specializing session, has done research that shows that dairy producers who buy forage from someone who specializes in forage production save money and get better quality forage than if they try to produce it themselves," he said.

Specializing is one of the five themes to be covered during the conference. The others are farm finances, labor, records, and facilities and the environment.

"There hasn't been a statewide activity for dairy producers in Ohio for a long time, and everyone in the industry has had a concern that the dairy industry in Ohio is falling behind," he said. "This conference will draw producers together on a statewide level to talk about the restructuring of Ohio's dairy industry that is needed to keep it competitive."

The conference will feature two nationally known dairy speakers, Don Rogers and Bernie Erven. Rogers, farm financial management consultant for the

Farm Credit System in New York and the northeast, will discuss "Farm Finances for the Rest of Us" on Dec. 8.

In addition to working with Farm Credit, Rogers also does private farm management work for producers and lenders.

Erven, Ohio State University Extension human resource management specialist, will talk about "Managing Labor on Dairy Farms" on Dec. 9.

Other topics discussed at the conference will include dairy expansion, how to use farm records, sand bedding, designing efficient dairy facilities and environmental regulations. There will be topics of interest to all dairy producers, regardless of the size and type of their oper-

ation, Noyes said. Many sessions will include farmer panels sharing their experiences.

The conference is co-sponsored by Ohio State University Extension and the newly formed Progressive Dairy Producers of Ohio. A reception is planned during the conference at 5:30 p.m. on Dec. 8 to introduce the new organization.

"We don't have an Ohio dairy association that represents all Ohio dairy producers, and most other major dairy states do," Noyes said. "The Progressive Dairy Producers of Ohio will serve as one voice for dairy producers in the state that can say, 'This will hurt the industry,' or 'This is what should be done to improve it.'"

Registration for the event is \$89 for both days if registration is postmarked by Nov. 22. Two-day registration is \$109 after that date. Participants also can register for only one day at \$55 before Nov. 22 or \$69 after.

The registration fee includes a copy of the conference proceedings, three breaks, one breakfast, one lunch and the reception.

For registration material and more information about the Ohio Dairy Conference, people interested should contact Normand St-Pierre at (614) 292-6507 or Jennifer Winkler at (614) 688-3143, both at Ohio State in Columbus, or their county office of Ohio State University Extension.

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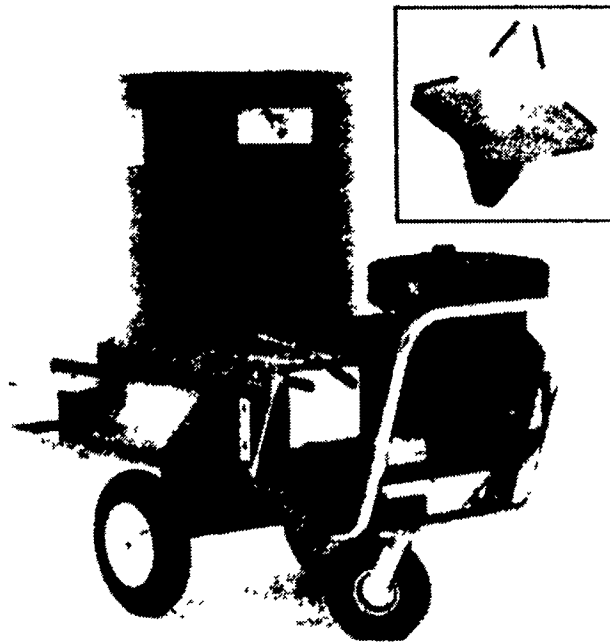
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