



From the Department of Dairy and Animal Science

This regular column from Penn State's Department of Dairy and Animal Science features the research findings, student opportunities, and reports on other important topics generated in the Department. The back issues of the column are archived on Lancaster Farming's Internet www.lancasterfarming.com home page. Look for them.

National Pork Producers Launches Environmental Assessment Program

Bob Mikesell

Senior Extension Associate

Responding to global economic forces, swine farms are becoming fewer in number and larger in size. People who live near these operations are concerned, understandably, about a large operation's odor and its potential effect on water quality.

The National Pork Producers Council (NPPC) has initiated several programs to alleviate public concerns about both water pollution and odor from large swine farms. One effort is the Environmental Assurance Program to educate producers about their potential to pollute and introduce best management practices to avoid pollution.

When correctly stored and

applied to cropland, nutrients contained in liquid manure can improve soil fertility without affecting ground water. However, if stored in unsafe structures or applied incorrectly, liquid manure can potentially pollute waterways.

A second program of the NPPC is the Odor Solutions Initiative to identify potential long-term solutions to odor problems. Odor can arise from manure application, manure storage, and the pig barns themselves. Odors from all three sources can be reduced through good management and sanitation.

The NPPC has spent \$1.5 million in check-off funds to develop the National Pork Producers Council's On-Farm Odor and Environmental

Assessment Program (OFO/EAP) This educational program uses a team of two trained assessors to physically evaluate swine operations. One assessor is from a publicly funded institution such as the Cooperative Extension Service or the Soil Conservation Service. The other assessor is a private individual.

During an assessment, the two assessors visit the farm and evaluate management practices in five areas of the operation:

- 1) General site. Is the farm clean, well kept, and visually pleasing? Where are neighbors in relation to the farm and manure application areas?
- 2) Buildings. Are technologies and management practices in place to keep odor generation to a minimum? Are the pigs comfortable and healthy as a result of good ventilation, sanitation, and management?
- 3) Manure Storage Structures. Are structures properly constructed and free of leaks and structural damage? Are structures secured and safe?
- 4) Manure Land Application. Is manure applied at reasonable times and rates or in accordance with a nutrient management plan? Is manure application equipment well-maintained? Are manure application records kept?
- 5) Mortality Management. Are dead animals secured and disposed of in a timely and

environmentally responsible manner?

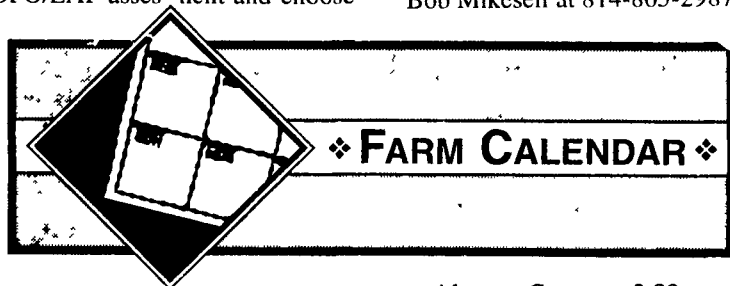
After the assessment and before leaving the farm, the team discusses their findings with the producer. During the exit interview, the assessors place special emphasis on practices that are unsafe or could potentially threaten ground water. Assessment findings are written in a final report, signed by both assessors and forwarded to the producer. All the data collected during the assessment are entered into a national database kept by NPPC. This database may eventually yield information that will allow producers to further reduce odor.

Recently the NPPC signed a voluntary Compliance Audit Program (CAP) agreement with Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). Under this agreement, producers who undergo an OFO/EAP assessment and choose

to participate in the CAP program receive a reduction of fines for any nutrient management violations uncovered. Producers who have no violations or take corrective action receive a seal issued by NPPC and EPA indicating their successful completion of the assessment. To further strengthen their support of this program, EPA has released \$5 million to pay for assessments.

By the end of 2001, National Pork Producers Council has set a goal of assessing farms that raise 80 percent of pigs nationally. Pennsylvania's goal is to assess 60 farms in 1999. As of April 1 this year, twenty one farms in Pennsylvania have requested an OFO/EAP audit. Pennsylvania pork producers are encouraged to have their farms assessed and to participate in the CAP program.

For more information or to request an assessment, call Pennsylvania state coordinator Bob Mikesell at 814-865-2987



FARM CALENDAR

(Continued from Page A10)

Saturday, May 22

Berks County Dairy Princess Pageant, Berks County Ag Center, Leesport, 6:15 p.m.
Regional 4-H Achievement Day,

Altoona Campus, 9:30 a.m.-4 p.m.

Sunday, May 23

Monday, May 24

Tuesday, May 25

Contaminated Soil Cleanup Short Course, Maryland 4-H Center, College Park, thru May 27.
Mid-Atlantic Regional Post-Harvest Handling Conference, Sheraton Inn, Fredericksburg, Va., thru May 27.

Wednesday, May 26

Natural Landscapes and Habitats Walk, Foulkeways Retirement Community, 3 p.m.
No-Till Vegetable Field Day, Westtown Rd., West Chester, 1:30 p.m.

Thursday, May 27

Fruit Twilight Meeting, Rohrbach's Orchard, Catawissa, 6 p.m.-9 p.m.

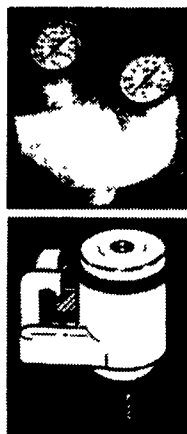
Friday, May 28

Saturday, May 29

Northwest Keystone Junior Beef Classic, Butler County Fairgrounds, thru May 30.

Sunday, May 30

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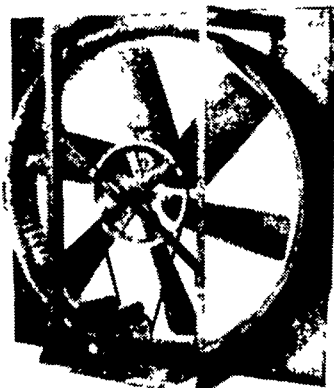


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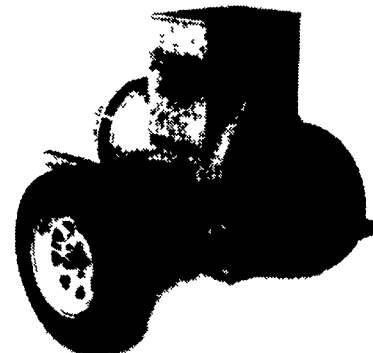
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