

Agriculture Secretary Announces 2000 Farm Show Schedule

HARRISBURG (Dauphin Co.) — Agriculture Secretary Samuel E. Hayes Jr. announced that the 84th Pennsylvania Farm Show is scheduled Saturday, Jan. 8, to Thursday, Jan. 13, here at the Farm Show Complex.

"As we enter the new millennium, the 2000 Farm Show provides a unique venue to witness both the latest in agricultural technologies and time-honored traditions," Hayes said. "The men and women of Pennsylvania agriculture will convene under one roof to showcase the diversity of Pennsylvania agriculture and the role it plays in our heritage and the future of this great commonwealth."

"Every Pennsylvanian is invited to the 2000 Pennsylvania Farm

Show to see why we all can be proud of Pennsylvania agriculture. This year's show includes many features and events for competitors, visitors, and their families."

Hayes noted that agriculture is Pennsylvania's No. 1 industry, generating \$44.1 billion from the farm to the table.

Premiums totaling \$263,841 will be distributed to about 10,000 winners during the 2000 Pennsylvania Farm Show. This year, the show again features a very large dairy show and a variety of livestock competitions. Poultry exhibits once again will join the many agriculture exhibits at this year's show.

Additions to the Farm Show will include an enlarged butter sculp-

ture, the introduction of a cheese sculpture, and an agricultural biotechnology program sponsored by the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture and the Pennsylvania Biotechnology Association. Tuesday, Jan. 11, at the Agriculture Building, is for nonspecialists and will concentrate on various aspects of agricultural biotechnology and their potential contributions.

Many popular venues will be returning to this year's show, such as the Sheep-to-Shawl contest, and the Family Living and Agricultural Learning Center, which will feature a variety of ongoing exhibits and demonstrations. This venue will be on the second level of the northeast building.

Also part of the Pennsylvania Farm Show is the second annual Juried Art Exhibition, which benefits the Pennsylvania Farm Show Scholarship Foundation for Pennsylvania college students. Submitted artwork and prints will be available for purchase throughout the show with the "Best of Show" being auctioned off on Thursday, Jan. 13, following the Livestock Sale of Champions in the Small Arena of the Farm Show Complex.

The Pennsylvania Farm Show opens on Saturday, Jan. 8, and is free and open to the public.

"Families — small and large — are encouraged to attend this great agriculture exposition. There truly is something for everyone," Hayes said.

There is a \$5 parking fee per vehicle in the Farm Show parking lot, which is along Cameron Street, just off Rt. 81.

Ridge Administration Releases Rebates

HARRISBURG (Dauphin Co.) — Agriculture Secretary Samuel E. Hayes Jr. recently announced that the first checks have been issued to drought-stricken farmers under the Governor's Hay Assistance Rebate Program.

"These checks, and the ones that soon will follow, represent the first drought-related cash assistance to reach Pennsylvania farmers," Hayes said.

To date, 82 checks totaling more than \$92,000 have been mailed to eligible farmers to partially reimburse them for the cost of purchasing hay to feed their livestock. These will be followed by rebates to nearly 4,000 eligible farmers, who have returned the required documentation such as receipts, to the Department of Agriculture, showing proof of purchase.

On Sept. 10, Gov. Ridge released \$5 million in emergency funds to provide direct relief for Pennsylvania's drought-stricken farmers.

Under the Hay Assistance Rebate Program, farmers are eligible to receive a \$60 rebate for each ton of hay purchased in the state; a \$50 rebate for each ton of hay purchased out of state; and a \$25-per-ton rebate to help defray long-distance transportation costs.

Hay purchased in Pennsylvania or in bordering states and Virginia is not eligible for long-haul transportation assistance.

Gov. Ridge's plan also included more than 350 tons of hay donated by Wisconsin farmers and transported and distributed by the Agriculture Department to some of Pennsylvania's most profoundly stricken farmers.

To be eligible, livestock farmers had to certify at least a 30 percent crop loss.

On Monday, Gov. Ridge signed into law Senate Bill 1135, the largest state aid package for drought-stricken farmers in the nation this year. The law makes available \$82.6 million in state funds: \$60 million in grants for eligible farmers, \$5.6 million to subsidize crop insurance costs for farmers, \$2 million to reimburse commercial orchard and fruit-tree nursery owners for losses from the plum pox virus, and \$15 million for flood relief.

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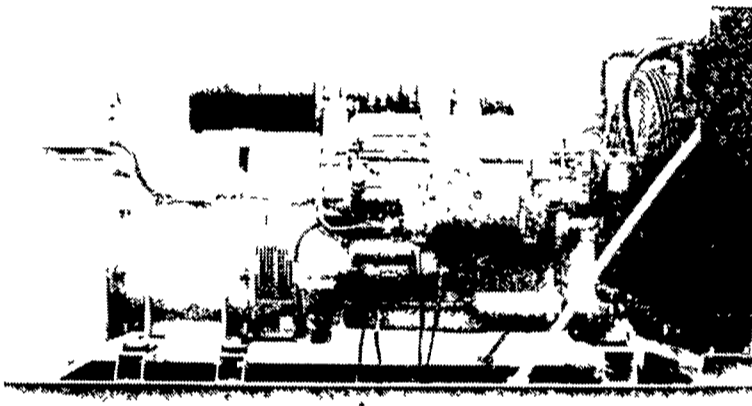
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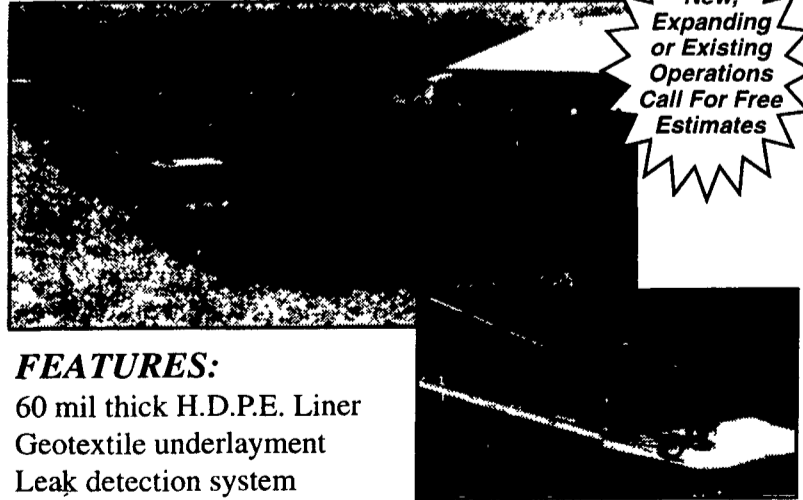
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