

## Aggressive Strategies In Place To Fight Fruit Virus

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Adams Co. correspondent

**BIGLERVILLE (Adams Co.)**  
— Taking an aggressive stance, state and federal agricultural authorities and foreign scientists are working quickly in an effort to eradicate the plum pox virus that has infected the stonefruit crop in Adams County.

The state recently released \$2 million to fight the virus, state Secretary of Agriculture Samuel E. Hayes, Jr. said in a press briefing Tuesday evening at the Penn State Fruit Lab in Biglerville.

Hayes will work with the state's fruit growers to use the money in conjunction with that expected from the federal government to not only help producers deal with the losses, but to fund projects to eradicate the virus.

The secretary said he has asked U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Dan Glickman to declare an emergency, which would open up funds to fruit-growers who are impacted by the virus

In addition, the USDA invited scientists from France, Hungary, and Spain to present a workshop to fruit growers and others who are working with the problem.

In Europe, plum pox virus was the first described in Bulgaria in the 1930s; however, it may have been in existence as early as 1910. It has since progressively spread throughout most European countries, the Mediterranean, and England.

In 1988, the virus was identified in Egypt. It has also been found throughout Turkey, Syria, India, and most of Chile. In 1994, it was estimated that 100 million trees in Europe were infected with the virus.

Hayes said of the Europeans, "they have been stricken by this curse and are struggling through the regimens necessary to contain it, manage it, and eradicate it."

France, England, and the Netherlands have been very successful in eradicating the virus rather quickly.

Noting that the common-

wealth is grateful the USDA invited the European scientists to Pennsylvania, Hayes said, "This is not just a Pennsylvania problem. This virus has the capacity to go far beyond where it is at this time (which is known to be on the property of four fruit growers in Latimore and Huntingdon townships in Adams County). It has every potential to spread beyond the political boundaries of Pennsylvania.

"We are a major stone-fruit producer, but so is the United States. I'm hopeful that what we do in Pennsylvania will serve the fruit growers across the nation," he said.

The secretary said "I hope it was found early enough to eliminate it in its tracks, rather than manage it, although no scientist knows the answer to that."

He explained there is a survey under way to determine how the virus got here, but at this time there is no answer to that question, either. He theorized that possibly it came to Adams County on root stock, bud stock, grafting materials, "or someone

bringing it from the homeland."

Surrounded by USDA and PDA officials and the European scientists, Hayes said the cost of the virus "will be tens of millions of dollars."

Ruth Welliver, state virologist, said not only are the fruit growers affected, but so are the nursery people. "I just heard from Oregon that \$90,000 was lost in nursery sales slated for Canada." Canada has placed an embargo on such materials coming from the United States.

She said that a statewide check will be taken in the spring to determine how far the virus might have spread. Hayes had

said it is not known at this point how widespread the problem is.

Comparing it to the avian influenza outbreak of recent years, Hayes said he learned "there is only one way to go about it and that's aggressively, and all the time. In this case we'll be just as aggressive."

The virus identified in Adams County is the D strain which is the most common and was originally found in apricots in France.

Hayes also noted that while the fruit of trees infected with the virus might not look good, they are perfectly OK to eat. "It is the same with avian influenza. It cannot harm humans."

## Bond Issue To Reduce Preservation Waiting List

**LANCASTER (Lancaster Co.)**  
— On Wednesday, the Lancaster County commissioners approved a \$25 million bond issue to preserve 166 working farms from a six-year waiting list.

"This is an investment in Lancaster County's future, and I don't think you can make a better investment at this time," said Gene Garber, chairman of the county's Agricultural Preserve Board and a West Donegal Township farmer.

According to a story in the Lancaster New Era, Garber, whose agency was founded in 1980 to preserve the county's best farms, said the new bond program is

monumental.

Because there has been a waiting list, other farmers have been hesitant to enroll in the program because they knew they might have to wait years before they could receive payment for preserving their farms, according to the New Era. The bond money could help wipe out the current backlog of preservation applications within two years.

On the waiting list are 166 farms, which comprise about 13,000 acres of farmland. So far, about 380 farms have been preserved here, encompassing about 32,000 acres.

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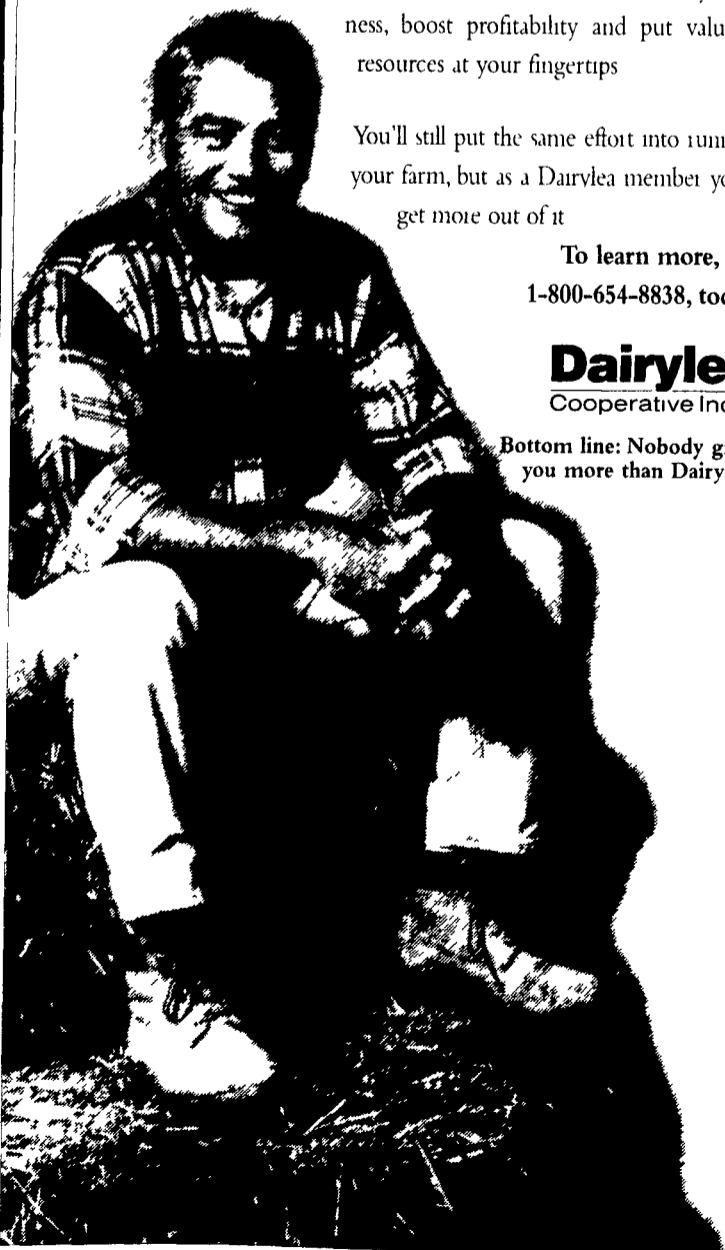
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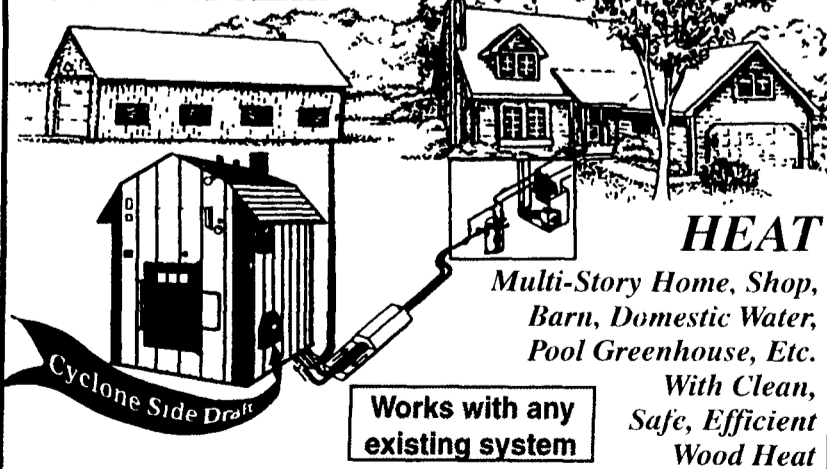
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