

Past Year

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sorry to see you go," the editorial noted. "But we understand."

Hog Prices

Recover Slightly

Even with current hog average prices hovering between

36.00-37.50 per hundredweight at 49-54 percent lean, many producers agree that 40.00 per hundredweight is breakeven.

Before the start of the 1999 state meeting of the Pennsylvania Pork Producers Council in early February, one packer commented on the "worst situation the hog producers have gone through in the history of the industry," noted Tom Leidy of

Leidy's Inc., Souderton.

And if it was horrible for producers — who looked at prices plummeting to 10, six, even eight cents per pound for hogs. The Pennsylvania Pork Producers Council passed a resolution at a meeting early in March to propose, nationally, suspending sow house production to the National Pork Producers Council. Unfortunately, what they were attempting to do they found out was not considered by the national council because it wasn't legal to do so. It violates anti-trust legislation.

If prices were horrific for producers, they were, in some cases, even worse for packers.

For Hatfield, the largest pork packer in the region, Phil Clemens, president, spoke at a Lancaster county meeting in mid-December. The great hog depression of 1998 dealt blows to packers, too.

"I have never been more uncomfortable in my life," said Clemens. "I never want to go through that market again."

Clemens believes "partnering" is the key.

Partnering with retailers, Clemens noted, works in Japan and in the European marketplace. He believes it will happen here, given time.

"We can't have the 1998-1999 scenario happen again," he said.

"Retailers have to share profits back with producers."

In late April, a lengthy position paper was advanced by the National Farmers Union that represented a consensus of 29 of the U.S. farm and rural groups. The paper included policies the National Agricultural Summit, the leadership group organized by the paper, wants the nation's political leaders to adopt.

While the pork industry continues to become more vertically integrated, in step with the poultry industry, the Summit took steps to address the issue of increasing concentration of ownership of basic industries, increasingly restricting producer options.

In mid-May, farm equipment manufacturer New Holland NV, based in Amsterdam with North American headquarters in New Holland, announced it was purchasing Case Corporation, based in Racine, Wis., for \$4.3 billion.

The 1998 net revenues for New Holland NV were \$5.7 billion. Case's revenues were \$6.1 billion.

The merger created a company, Case-New Holland, with revenues close to \$12 billion per year, keeping up with sales of Deere and Company, Moline, Ill., with sales of about \$13 billion in 1998.

Fiat S.p.A. in Italy owns 71 per-

cent of New Holland. New Holland has approximately 6,100 dealers and 21,300 employees. Case operates through about 4,900 dealers and employs 17,700.

The year reflected a national trend of "rampant consolidation and acquisition," according to Keith Hevenor in an editorial in Electronic Publishing. The trend apparently crosses industries. A year, Hevenor noted, that also saw J.F.K. Jr. die in a plane crash, 12 students killed in a senseless shooting at Columbine High School, the crash of EgyptAir Flight 990, a U.S. president facing impeachment, and Turkey suffering a devastating earthquake, he noted.

It was also the year that a little-known but dangerous virus made its way onto peach orchards in Adams County, reported in late October in *Lancaster Farming*.

The plum pox virus was detected for the first time on trees in a York Springs grower's peach and nectarine orchards. Officials continue to sort through information on how the disease arrived in Adams County, how it spreads, and ways to contain and eradicate it. But work must continue, and quickly, to prevent spreading of the virus in the spring. European

scientists arrived in mid-December and a grower meeting was conducted in early November in Biglerville to deal with management strategies.

It was also the year that the Reading Fair broke ground on a new site in mid-May, but cancelled the fair weeks before it began because of incomplete construction. A fair was scheduled for early August 2000.

Bright Spot — Farmland Preservation

Preservation 2000 is a new plan to preserve Pennsylvania's farmland and open space. A press conference was conducted in early September on the farm of Kevin and Audary Rohrer family. Officials

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Foragers and graziers continue to improve their operations. At this year's forage conference, a special award for forage and grazing contributions to the industry was presented to Larry Muller, Penn State Dairy and Animal Science Department, left, by Paul Craig.

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