

# Temporary Increase Added

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that is sold as Class I milk in Pennsylvania, PMMB expects the added premium will influence other premiums.

"Since we passed on the premium to a good portion of dairy producers, it will encourage other markets to pay more premiums for milk," said Luke Brubaker, a member of the Pennsylvania Milk Marketing Board and a dairy farmer in Mt. Joy. "It isn't going to be a total help for everyone, but it is significant assistance in a time with profits are low to nothing or even less."

According to Brubaker, PMMB wanted the increase to be enough to help farmers but not too much that it would flood Pennsylvania's market with outside milk.

"If we increased the premium too much, then processors could purchase milk from outside the state and transport it into Pennsylvania for a cheaper price than they could buy it from Pennsylvania dairy farmers," said Brubaker. "In general, though, processors like to patronize Pennsylvania dairy farmers be-

cause it helps to sustain the industry."

PMMB has established an order that calls for the temporary increase. The increase is designed to alleviate from the farmer some of the burden of rising diesel fuel prices and low milk prices.

The order calls for the temporary increase to be extended for two months past the point when diesel fuel prices fall back down to the November 1999 average, which was \$1.37 a gallon. The two-month extension was established to help cover some of the farmer's costs incurred during the months of February and March, when fuel prices began to rise.

The temporary increase in the over-order premium resulted from a March 2 emergency hearing held by PMMB. Several farmer, processor, and consumer representatives testified during the hearing.

According to Brubaker, even though the temporary increase will cause about a four-cent increase in the price per gallon at the store, consumers at the hearing were in favor of the increase as long as they knew it would

help Pennsylvania's dairy farmers. PMMB has even received several letters from consumers asking for the temporary increase to support the dairy farmers.

Dairy farmers in Pennsylvania are fortunate to have the Pennsylvania Milk Marketing Board regulating the milk price in stores. Since December 1999, over-order premiums mandated by PMMB have generated an additional \$194,752,000 to Pennsylvania dairy farmers.

The Pennsylvania Milk Marketing Board is an independent agency that has three representatives on the Board and a small staff. The representatives on the board include one farmer, one farmer/processor, and one consumer.

"When the price of milk to

the farmer decreases, the price in the store goes down almost simultaneously, thanks to PMMB," said Brubaker. "It is our job to see that the farmer receives his fair share of his labors."

According to Brubaker, the dairy industry is the biggest agriculture industry in Pennsylvania. It is very viable to the infrastructure of Pennsylvania's economy. PMMB helps sustain the dairy industry.

"99 percent of stores in Pennsylvania sell their milk at the minimum state price mandated by PMMB," said Brubaker. "The farm price is the trigger price that affects all milk prices. When the producers lose money on the milk price, the processor and store retailer also lose profits."

"It is to the farmers' advantage because of how quickly store and processor prices respond to low milk prices," said Brubaker.

Although PMMB does not expect it to save every dairy farmer from lost profits, the board does hope the temporary increase will help sustain the dairy industry in Pennsylvania.

"Not every farmer is going to receive same mailbox because of administration costs and premiums," said Brubaker. "And not everyone is going to have the same economics as his neighbor because of input costs and debt load. Overall, the industry has been very receptive to what we're doing because it helps keep the dairy industry alive in Pennsylvania."

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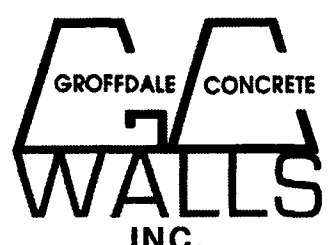


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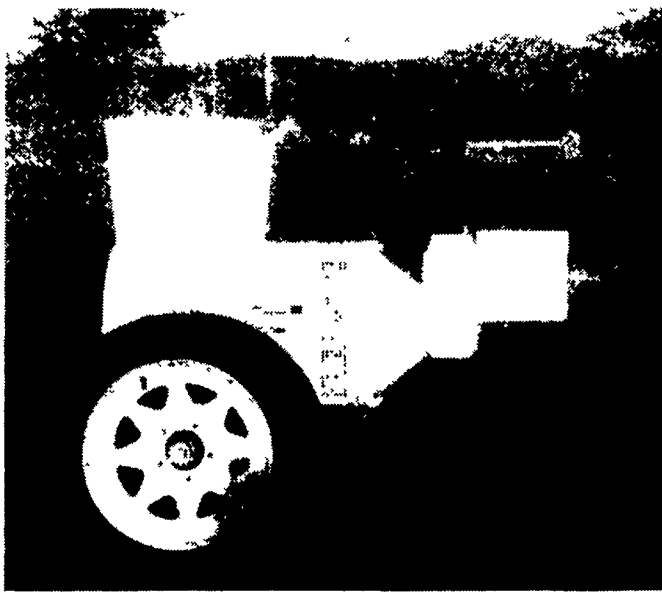
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