

Dairy Alliance Created To Aid Progressive Farmers

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MIDDLETOWN (Dauphin Co.) — To help dairy producers keep up with the fast-paced and ever-changing dairy industry, the Pennsylvania State University has launched "Dairy Alliance," a new initiative to enhance the economic development of the dairy industry.

Dairy Alliance will draw on the resources of industry professionals and Penn State faculty and staff to provide dairy farmers with the latest information and programs they need to stay progressive.

"Our goal is to enhance the economic development of dairy through focused education programs," said N. Alan Bair, director of dairy industry relations for Penn State. "The Dairy Alliance is not just Penn State's initiative. It really depends on the support of industry, and its ultimate audience is the dairy farmer."

The focus areas that Dairy Alliance will target are labor management, information management, and nutrient management. To help develop programs and work with farmers, Penn State will hire several new positions within the University and in Cooperative Extension.

Three positions were created in the Department of Dairy and Animal Science. Tammy Perkins, formerly with the Michigan Farm Bureau and American Cancer Society, filled the first position, program manager, on January 1. On March 1, Brad Hilty was hired in the information management position at Penn State. Hilty was an independent farm management consultant. Richard Stup, formerly a feed management consultant with Renaissance Nutrition, started this Wednesday in the labor management position.

Additionally, there will be one position filled in the Agricultural Economics and Rural Sociology Department and three and a half positions filled in Cooperative Extension. Those positions include two in ag engineering, one in herd health, and a part-time position in farm management.

"Think of these new employees as additional resources to extension," said Bair. "They may, depending on the time and abilities of local extension agents, work directly with some farmers. However, their main responsibility will be developing programs that will be administered by others, including county extension agents, indus-

try professionals, consultants, and even producers."

Another role of the new University hires will be to remain close to the industry and know what resources are available.

"If they find a company that has an excellent resource for farmers, they will work with that company to extend that program to a wider audience," said Bair. "If a company has a wide audience and identifies specific program needs, then they can go to Dairy Alliance staff to get the needed help."

Dairy Alliance is designed to bring resources together across the industry and multiply those resources to get them where they are needed. One component of the Dairy Alliance is a comprehensive database of resources available to dairy farmers. Perkins will be managing the database, which farmers can access by calling the Dairy Alliance's toll-free number, 1-888-373-PA DAIRY.

For example, if a dairy farmer is expanding his operation and needs to know names of builders in his area, he can call Tammy to find out the information. If a farmer needs information on heifer raising, then the database can direct him to the appropriate publications and organiza-

tions.

Bair emphasized that the Dairy Alliance was designed to complement existing extension programs and help aid farmers who are progressive and looking to the future.

"Extension has always had the job of educating the dairyman," said Bair. "But we realize that there are a lot of progressive dairymen out there who can adopt new technology faster than extension agents can keep up with it. The Dairy Alliance is a partnership formed with companies that have a lot of resources, manpower, money, and educational tools to keep up with the rapidly-changing industry."

The core dollars funding Dairy Alliance come from increased funding included for Cooperative Extension in the state's appropriation for Penn State. "The program was very strongly supported by Penn State President Spanier," said Bair. "The support was also very evident within the dairy industry."

According to Bair, the Professional Dairy Managers of Pennsylvania, a group of farmers who stay with the latest technology and innovations in the dairy industry, asked for the initiative

because they needed the extension system to keep up with them.

"The Dairy Alliance will be 100 percent focused on helping dairy producers," said Bair. "This was very important to legislators that these funds help dairy producers."

In addition to new programs and the database, Dairy Alliance will also sponsor meetings to educate dairy farmers on various issues. Two meetings have been held in Franklin and Lancaster Counties that focused on feeding management and labor management. The meetings were coordinated by local extension agents and co-sponsored by Dairy Alliance.

Dairy Alliance also hosted several DairyWorks seminars featuring Dr. Tom Fuhrmann, DVM, a management consultant from Arizona who has worked with some of the largest dairies in the world. The meetings were co-sponsored by Penn State Veterinary Science Extension and Keystone Agway, in addition to the Dairy Alliance.

As part of the initiative, Penn State will also launch a new Dairy Alliance web site, www.dairyalliance.com. While the comprehensive database that Perkins is developing will only be available through extension agents for the first several years, eventually Dairy Alliance hopes to make it available to all dairyman through the web site.

"The information and programs that Dairy Alliance will provide is applicable regardless

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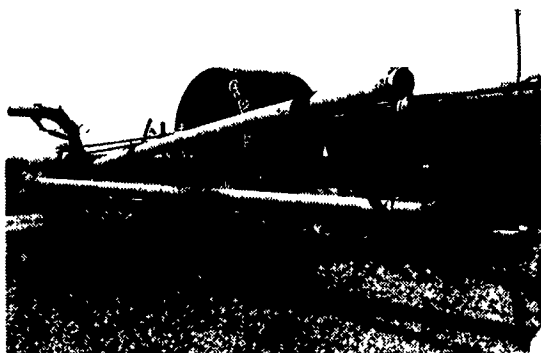
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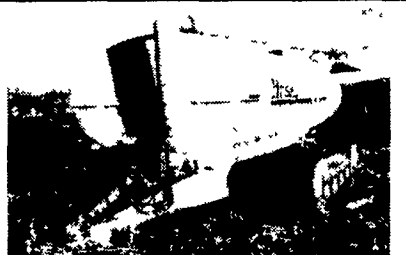
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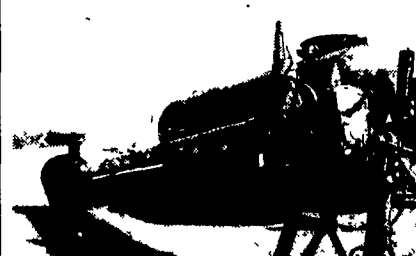
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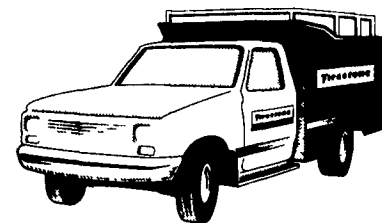
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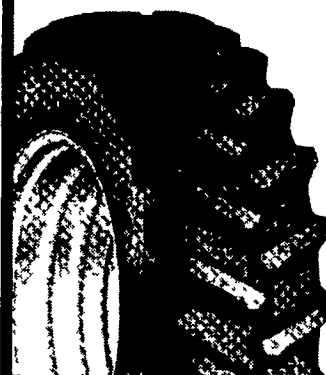


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