

Farmers to Visit Harrisburg In Support of Legislative Goals

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courts, has skyrocketed insurance costs to farmers and businesses, has prevented farmers and others from obtaining insurance coverage, has caused taxpayers to pay more taxes to protect government from lawsuits, has discouraged manufacturers from marketing useful products, and has discouraged government and civic organizations from providing helpful public services and programs. Farm Bureau is a member of the Civil Justice Coalition, which is proposing changes in law and court rules. The coalition has introduced S.B. 5, the Lawsuit

Abuse Reform package, which would accomplish the following: give courts more authority to penalize those responsible for frivolous lawsuits, put limits on punitive damage amounts, eliminate the practice of searching for a rich defendant in a lawsuit, let juries hear evidence of substance or alcohol abuse leading to a plaintiff's injury, reduce awards for "future losses" to a reasonable present value, and let juries hear about compensation being received from other sources due to an injury suffered by a plaintiff. In addition, the coalition is urging senators to write the chief justice of the state supreme court in support of pro-

posed changes in court rules to bring about tort reform.

•Drought relief assistance. The 1999 drought was one of the worst ever suffered by Pennsylvania farmers. Crop losses were estimated at between \$500 million and \$700 million. In response to inadequate federal assistance, Farm Bureau sought \$200 million in drought relief from the General Assembly last year. While only \$65 million was committed for drought aid, during floor debate on the issue legislators said additional funding could be included in the new state budget if necessary. Outdated crop yield calculations have limited the amounts of

crop loss that are eligible for federal relief, which in turn reduces state assistance, since Pennsylvania's aid is restricted to 75 percent of the federal aid a farmer receives. Hay crop losses,

in particular, are not being adequately addressed. Farm Bureau is asking its members to talk to their legislators about the situation and the need for additional state drought relief.

Northwest Regional Ag, Dairy Day Announced

ERIE (Erie Co.)—The 2000 Northwest Regional Ag and Dairy Day will be held on Thursday, March 23, 2000, at Allegheny College's Shafer Auditorium in Meadville, PA.

This year's event will feature 50 agri-business exhibitors and a slate of nationally known speakers, according to George C. Wilcox, County Extension Agent. Doors will be open at

8:30 a.m. for viewing exhibits.

Advanced reservations are required and lunch tickets are available for \$3 each at the Crawford County Cooperative Extension, phone (814) 333-7460; Erie County Cooperative Extension, phone (814) 825-0900; Mercer County Cooperative Extension, phone (724) 662-3141; or many of the area ag businesses.

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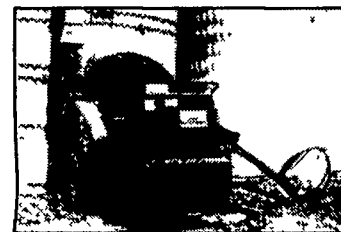
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Computer Workshops

LANCASTER (Lancaster Co.)—Two different hands-on computer workshops are being offered by Penn State Cooperative Extension to help dairy producers and their record keepers learn how to utilize computers to help them manage their financial and herd data more effectively. These workshops are designed for the people who are actually responsible for keeping the farm records.

The first workshop is three days and is on "Using Quick Books Pro" as a way to help people learn the basics of farm financial records. Dates of the course are March 30, April 4, and April 6. Cost is \$40 per farm, and preregistration is required. Call (717) 394-6851 before March 27. The workshop will be at the Lancaster Farm and Home Center, and lunch is on your own.

The second workshop is on "Using Spreadsheets" such as Excel to help a variety of records and to perform a variety of calculations, such as ration adjustments, economic analyses, generating a variety of summaries, and other reports that help producers make more informed management decisions. Dates of this course are April 5 and April 7, cost is \$25 per person and registration is required. Call (717) 394-6851 before March 31. The workshop will be at the Lancaster Farm and Home Center and lunch is on your own.