

New Program Aims To Strengthen Pennsy

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ances" are popping up across the country, and as close to home as the Virginia foothills and eastern Ohio.

With a little bit of teamwork, cattle feeders here in Pennsylvania can provide a missing link in the chain. In fact, they are the initial focus for the state's new program, "Blueprint for Success for Cattle Feeding in Pennsylvania."

In March, area cattle feeders and beef industry representatives convened to get the program details. Wendall Landis, who has hired in February as Pennsylvania's director of beef quality assurance certification, was introduced. Described as the state's new beef industry advocate and the beef producer's ultimate resource person, Landis' role as program director provides a one-stop shop for producer assistance with issues relating to both beef quality assurance and profitability.

"I'm a communication link, a liaison between the industry and the cattle feeder. I'm here to help get people and resources together, provide tools, and get information to help produce quality cattle profitably."

For instance, Landis said, he can facilitate teleconferences to link industry representatives and experts to tackle a problem, answer a question, or handle an issue. He stressed that he is looking forward to supporting the strengths and improving the weaknesses at the farm level and providing an outside objective opinion.

A committee cross-section of the industry, producers, extension, processing and allied agribusinesses met for more than a year to look at ways to strengthen Pennsylvania's \$360 million a year beef industry and its producers.

The results are what the committee believes the state's cattle feeders "need to do ... to remain a viable part of agriculture in Pennsylvania and to help carry the industry in the next 10-20 years," said Dr. John Comerford, Penn State extension beef specialist. "This is not a one-year program, it's not a three-year program, this is a continuing process, and I hope you realize it's available now

and in the future."

A joint initiative between Penn State's College of Agricultural Sciences and the Pennsylvania Beef Council, the Blueprint is an organized effort to begin and intensive one-on-one education program linked to a Ten-Point Benchmark for Quality Cattle in Pennsylvania. The primary objective is twofold: to increase the beef value of cattle fed in Pennsylvania through benchmarks and best management practices and to see the industry grow here by improving profitability.

The 10-point benchmark pinpoints sources of value, or ways of avoiding packer discounts at slaughter. These 10 points, explained Comerford, are inde-

pendent of each other, because every cattle feeder is not going to meet all 10. For instance, the point dealing with cattle type doesn't mean to imply that a Holstein feeder can't be profitable. He can address other management and value issues on this list, said Comerford.

Paul Slayton, executive director of the Pennsylvania Beef Council, touched on the role of checkoff dollars in the program. "We had meetings to determine if the program fit in for checkoff dollars. This is a consumer-driven, quality assurance project and the answer is an overwhelming 'yes'."

Pennsylvania's Blueprint program was presented to the Cat-

tlemen's Beef Board in Denver, where the terminology was "tweaked" to reflect the consumer driven value objectives, said Slayton, adding that "it's going to be tweaked more, for new ideas and to continue to reflect where our efforts are best spent."

"The job is vast, but we've got an energetic, committed professional young man and we're releasing him today. He's going to provide you with the tools," Slayton said as he introduced program director Wendall Landis. With the 10-point benchmark as his guide, Landis said he will be instrumental in putting people together to troub-



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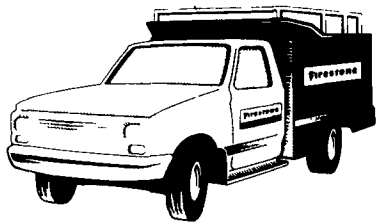
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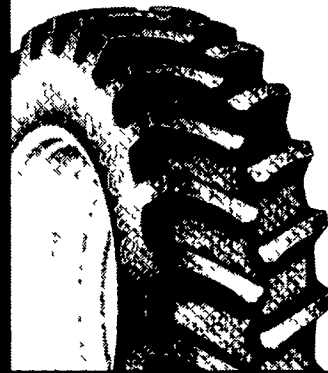
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