



Farm Management

TAKING CARE WHEN CHANGING COURSE

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The owner of an existing business, having enjoyed some measure of success, decides to steer a new course for the company, launching a new product aimed at new markets. Management is eager for an additional source of revenues, and commits to this new direction with the best of intentions, assuming that since the business has an established market presence, sales in the new area will follow. Then the business ends up floundering on the submerged reefs of market misunderstanding.

A fledging entrepreneur launches a new business with much fanfare, touting unique new products and promptly sails into oblivion with the company lost to the mists of insufficient markets.

Both these entrepreneurs scuttled their businesses by failing to realize that most con-

sumers do not purchase from you because you have a unique product or a recognized company name. They are drawn to your business because they have an unmet need for which you offer an attractive solution. They will make their purchase from you if they believe you offer the best value. Therefore, you should verify sufficient need exists before launching your business into new product directions. Otherwise you may end up with mediocre results from having to spend massive advertising budgets trying to convince people they need your new widget (instead of spending prudent advertising dollars focused on where consumers can get what they already want).

As part of your prelaunch planning, ask yourself, if consumers are satisfied with present products, why would they want to switch? Resist the temptation to provide your own answers. Conduct independent market research in your local trade area. The cost of this research will be far less than the cost of failure.

What are the existing barriers

to entry? If competitors already exist, you will need to overcome the advantages they already have. This usually requires considerable time, effort, and money.

For aspiring entrepreneurs, the focus should be on uncovering a clear consumer need that can be met through the application of their areas of expertise. Then and only then should they start developing a product to fulfill that need.

For owners of established businesses, if they want their company's name and reputation to aid in this process, they should not stray far from the products upon which their reputation has been built. For example, if you have a successful automotive dealership, your name will not be of considerable benefit if you open up a subsidiary selling home insurance.

As you plot the future course for your business, the foundation of your navigational philosophy should be a strategic map based on a strong content of marketing knowledge. You must strive not only to understand your customers' needs today but, even more importantly, how these needs are changing and where they will likely be tomorrow.

Whether you have a new or an existing business, without effective application of this future market knowledge or a sustained spate of fair winds known as luck, your company's voyage of profitable existence will be significantly shortened.

Secretary Hayes Conducts Plum Pox Briefing In Adams County

BIGLERVILLE (Adams Co.) — Agriculture Secretary Samuel E. Hayes Jr. recently conducted a briefing at the Pennsylvania State University Fruit Research Laboratory to explain how farmers can apply for indemnity payments and to announce the limited expansion of the plum pox virus (PPV) quarantine area.

Hayes announced that the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture's Plum Pox Virus Commercial Orchard Fruit Tree Indemnity Program is in place, and applications will be accepted through the Department of Agriculture's Bureau of Plant Industry.

"Following recent meetings in Washington, D.C., with federal agriculture officials, we arrived at a formula to compensate growers that will be managed through the state," Hayes said. "Now growers who are impacted by PPV can receive some reparation for the losses that this disease has caused."

Hayes also announced that the department recently detected sites outside the current quarantined areas of Latimore and Huntington townships in Adams County and South Middleton Township, Cumberland

County.

"Quarantined areas will expand to include Dickinson Township, Cumberland County, and portions of Menallen and Tyrone townships in Adams County," Hayes said. "Inspectors with the state Bureau of Plant Industry and the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service currently are surveying farms in the affected areas to determine the extent of infection as we take steps to eradicate this disease from our commonwealth orchards."

PPV affects stone-bearing fruits, including peaches, plums, nectarines and apricots. It is characterized by round spots (pox) on fruit, leaves, stems and seeds. It does not kill trees, but makes fruit unmarketable and drastically reduces yields. The disease does not affect humans.

Pennsylvania is a leading producer of fruit, ranking fourth nationally in peaches. Adams County is Pennsylvania's leading fruit-producing county.

In 1998, the value of Pennsylvania's stone fruit production was approximately \$25 million.

Last year, Gov. Tom Ridge released \$2 million to contain and eradicate the plum pox virus in Pennsylvania.

Farm Meetings Scheduled

Six farm meetings have been scheduled to discuss mastitis concerns. The meetings will focus on monitoring and evaluating mastitis situations, identifying the kinds of infections that are present, and strategies for preventing and combating mastitis.

Speakers include: Glenn Shirk, Lancaster County Extension Dairy Agent; Jeff Mamett, Upjohn Pharmacia; and at some of the meetings, local veterinarians and milk sanitarians.

Times and locations of the meetings are:

- Wednesday, Aug. 2, 10 a.m., Meadow Vista Farms (Don, Gerald and Eric Risser), southwest of Elizabethtown at 166 Risser Road, Bainbridge, Pa.; 7 p.m., Thomas Zartman, 890 Hill Top Road, west of Ephrata.

- Thursday, Aug. 3, 9 a.m., Levi Esh, south of Georgetown at 205 Quarry Road, Quarryville, Pa.; 7 p.m., Nelson Weiler, 2568 Newport Road, Manheim, Pa.

- Friday, Aug. 4, 10 a.m., Neffdale Farms (Charles, Ken and Roy Neff), east of Strasburg at 604 Strasburg Road, Paradise, Pa.; 7 p.m., Elvin Reiff, south of Mount Joy at 1775 Pinkerton Road, Mount Joy, Pa.

A sub-type lunch and dinner will be provided. Thus, reservations are required. Reservations can be made by noon the day

before the meeting by calling the Lancaster County Cooperative Extension office (717) 394-6851, or by notifying the host farm.

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