


**Livestock Ledger**  
by  
**Chester D. Hughes**  
*Extension Livestock Specialist*



Cattle feeders with questions and concerns regarding recent changes in Pennsylvania's beef packing industry, should plan to attend the annual Lancaster Cattle Feeder's Day.

Scheduled for Tuesday, Jan. 29 at the Lancaster Farm and Home Center, the event will feature information presented by procurement personnel regarding Smithfield Food's acquisition of Moyer Packing in Souderton. Pending completion of Excel's agreement with Taylor Packing in Wyalusing, plans are for Excel representatives to also participate in this educational event.

Cattle Feeder's Day will also include presentations related to custom feeding, economics, and crop insurance.

**Winter Feed Requirements Of Beef Cows**

Following are three basic rules to evaluate the feed requirements of beef cows during the winter, according to Dr. John Comerford, Penn State Extension beef specialist.

1. Maintenance energy requirements increase by about one percent for each 1°F. below 32°F. The energy for maintenance for beef cows in the last 1/3 of pregnancy is about 11 megacalories per day. With an air temperature in dry air and no wind of 22°F., this means there is a 10 percent greater energy requirement. This 1.1 megacalories of energy needed is equivalent to about one pound

of corn or two pounds of orchardgrass hay.

2. The rule for accounting for wind chill is to use the wind chill temperature to adjust feed energy. For example, if the wind chill is zero°F., then the cow requires 32 percent more energy. This is about three pounds of corn or five to six pounds of orchardgrass hay.

3. The most serious condition is when the animal gets wet because the hair and hide lose their insulation capacity. The rule to use when the cattle are wet is to use 59°F. as the starting point and change the feed needs by two percent for each degree below 59°F. For example, if the cattle are wet and the wind chill is 9°F., the energy requirement is 100 percent higher. This is equivalent to feeding an additional 20 pounds of corn or 40 pounds of hay to a cow each day. Obviously, most cows could not consume enough feed to keep them at maintenance under these conditions, so they will start losing body condition. A windbreak or shelter from the rain is economically feasible as well as good animal husbandry.

**New Swine Finishing Barn**

Several 2,000 head finishing barns recently constructed in Pennsylvania provide open housing for pigs, and nearly eliminate labor associated with sorting hogs for market. These "self-sorting" barns contain four large pens housing approximately 500 pigs each. Large

pens containing many pigs reduce fighting and social competition common to pigs housed in smaller groups.

Gates separate a small section of each pen into a feeding area. For pigs to reach the feeding area, they must travel through a set of automatic scales. After eating at the automatic feeding stations, pigs return to the loafing area via a one-way gate. As pigs approach market weight, the scale computer individually weighs each pig as it enters the feeding area. If the pig exceeds the minimum weight for slaughter, the exit gate from the scale directs the pig into a "sorted" pen of pigs heavy enough for slaughter. Pigs that do not exceed the minimum weight enter the feeding area as usual.

Sorted pigs can then be loaded onto trucks with minimal time and labor.

An additional potential advantage to the system is to have the scales track the number of pigs within 10 to 15 pounds of the minimum weight. This information could be used to estimate how many hogs would be available for slaughter the following week.

**Eliminating Scrapie**

Recently, the U.S. Secretary of Agriculture announced an important new program to accelerate the eradication of the fatal brain disease, scrapie, from the nation's sheep flocks and goat herds.

Scrapie is a fatal, degenerative disease affecting the central nervous system. An abnormal protein, called a prion, is associated with the disease. Transmission primarily occurs at lambing/kidding through exposure of a ewe's/doe's offspring and other animals to an infected female's birth fluids and placenta; thus the emphasis placed on breeding animals in the eradication program.

Scrapie is in a class of diseases known as transmissible spongiform encephalopathies (TSEs). Other diseases in this class include bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE) in cattle

and Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) in deer and elk. Recent publicity surrounding TSEs, and limited knowledge about these diseases, has heightened public concern. Extensive epidemiological research has shown no evidence that scrapie can be transmitted to humans.

In order to eradicate scrapie among sheep and goats, methods for identifying infected and exposed animals must be created. Therefore, sheep and goats not enrolled in the Voluntary Scrapie Flock Certification Program (VSFCP) will be subject to new identification requirements before they change ownership and/or enter into interstate commerce.

The following animals will need ear tags or tattoos: All sheep 18 months and older; all breeding sheep; all scrapie exposed, suspect, test-positive and high-risk animals; breeding goats, except low-risk commercial goats; and all sheep and goats for exhibition. For the 2002 Pennsylvania Farm Show, officials will not expect sheep to bear official USDA ear tags.

As for the identification process, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) will provide ear tags, without charge, to producers. Tags will be available through the USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), Veterinary Services (VS Area Office and/or the State Veterinarian's office in each state). Metal ear tags are preferred because of their low cost and durability; however, plastic ear tags may be provided when requested.

Sheep producers who prefer to use a different type of tag may purchase official tags through specified, approved tag companies. A list of approved tag companies and tag types will be maintained on the APHIS scrapie web page, [www.aphis.usda.gov/vs/scrapie](http://www.aphis.usda.gov/vs/scrapie).

Producers will be required to keep identification records for five years after the animal has left the flock/herd.

In addition to official identification, each breeding sheep or goat crossing state lines or entering into interstate commerce must be accompanied by an official Certificate of Veterinary Inspection (health certificate) issued by an accredited veterinarian.

The American Sheep Industry Association estimates that scrapie costs the industry over \$20 million each year in lost export sales, disposal costs for offal, and lost productivity. Even though research studies have shown that scrapie is not a public health risk, public perception may one day dictate eradication of all TSEs. Therefore, it is in the industry's best interest to eliminate scrapie in the U.S.

For more information regarding scrapie eradication in Pennsylvania, call (717) 782-3442 or (610) 944-5962.

**Winter Care For Horses**

According to Dr. Ann Swinker, Penn State Extension equine specialist, neglect is the worse thing that happens to a horse during the winter months. Most horses are turned out to pasture and we only see them in the dark at feeding time. In the summer months, it is easy to provide loving care for the horse, when we are riding every day and want to make certain the horse is fit and in good health.

About the worst thing for a horse during the winter months is ice; most importantly, the ice that covers the watering trough or water bucket. Water for the horse during cold weather is too often overlooked. The water may freeze up making it inaccessible to the horse. Mature horses need about 10 gallons of water a day. To keep the horse healthy during freezing weather owners should make sure an ample supply of fresh water is always available. Excessively cold water will decrease the horses' consumption of water. Ideally, water should be maintained at a temperature of 40°F.

When the horse drinks less water, feed intake will decrease. A reduction in feed intake results in less energy being available to maintain body temperature and body weight during the cold months. Reduced feed and water intake could lead to colic and an impacted intestinal tract in the horse.

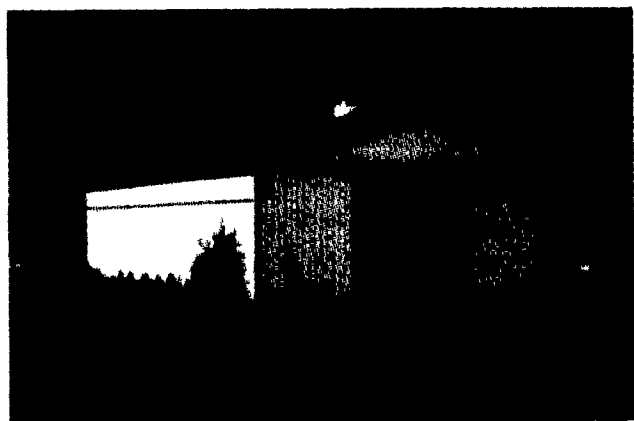
To help prevent water consumption problems in the winter, water should be made as accessible to the horse as possible. Heated waterers are one way to assure your horse an ample supply of drinking water. If electric water heaters are used, the water tank should be checked every day to insure that the heater is not shorting out and shocking the horse. An electric shock would prevent the horse from drinking.

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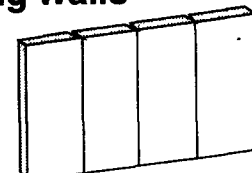
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