



# NASS

## Agriculture Counts

By Marc Tosiano  
Pa. State Statistician

### DAIRY HERD HEALTH

*Editor's Note: This is a monthly column from the Pennsylvania Ag Statistics Service (PASS), a field office of USDA's National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) in cooperation with the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture (PDA). The Website is [www.usda.gov/nass/](http://www.usda.gov/nass/).*

In 2002, the health of the Pennsylvania and national dairy herd will be measured as part of USDA's National Animal Health Monitoring System (NAHMS). Different species have been studied in recent years, with dairy last done in 1996.

Pennsylvania is one of 21 major dairy states included in this valuable study. The selected states include 80 percent of the dairy herds and 80 percent of the milk cows nationwide. Other nearby states in the study include New York, Vermont, Ohio, and Virginia.

The NAHMS study is a cooperative effort of NASS and the veterinary services division of APHIS (Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service).

In January and February, about 400 Pennsylvania dairies will be asked for their help in measuring herd health. The study includes various health issues such as Johne's disease, biosecurity, animal waste systems, food safety, and opinions about animal identification.

After the initial NASS interview, dairymen will be offered free tests from APHIS staff, including bulk tank milk cultures, Johne's disease evaluation, fecal cultures, and blood tests. Information from both the NASS and APHIS surveys are strictly confidential. For more information about NAHMS, see [www.aphis.usda.gov/vs/ceah/cahm](http://www.aphis.usda.gov/vs/ceah/cahm).

#### Free Catalog

The "NASS 2002 Guide to Products And Services" is available by calling (800) 727-9540. This 30-page booklet describes the national program of agricultural statistics provided by USDA's National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS).

All national reports are listed with instructions for how to access the reports at no charge via the Internet, e-mail subscriptions, and a fax service known as NASSFax. The paper reports can also be ordered for a fee.

#### Year-End Surveys Continue

Last month I discussed the year-end surveys done in December for crops, hogs, and poultry. In January, we ask growers for your help to measure production of other commodities during 2001.

Once again, the surveys mentioned below are conducted in all major states to generate national along with state production statistics for 2001. To see the results of all these surveys, see our Website at [www.usda.gov/nass/](http://www.usda.gov/nass/).

I hope you can find the time to help us make the most accurate "Agriculture Counts" by returning your survey form as soon as possible or answering our questions over the telephone.

#### Growers Crucial To Accurate Numbers

Recently I have been asked

how we generate our agricultural statistics. The source of nearly all our information comes from growers who are most knowledgeable about the commodities they raise.

Most growers take the time to answer our surveys. Thanks to the confidential information provided by growers, we can generate timely and accurate statistics about agriculture.

Thanks to you all. If you have questions, call us at (800) 498-1518.

Now, here is a brief list of the end-of-year surveys happening now through January.

#### Jan. 1 Cattle

##### And Sheep Surveys

These two surveys provide the only state-level measure of cattle and sheep herds. In July, only the largest operations are contacted for input to national-level data.

The cattle survey generates inventories for beef cows, milk, cows, bulls, heifers, steers, and calves. The survey also asks and publishes data about death loss, calves born, cattle on feed, and value of breeding stock.

The sheep survey targets inventories and values of ewes, rams, lambs for breeding, and market lambs by weight group. Other data requested includes lambs born, death losses, wool production, and wool prices received by farmers.

A letter was sent to about 1,600 cattle growers and 300 sheep farmers that were selected and we will ask for your help during early January. Both the "Cattle" and "Sheep And Goats" reports will be issued Feb. 1, 2002 (see [www.usda.gov/nass/search.htm](http://www.usda.gov/nass/search.htm)). Both reports include number of operations and inventories by size groups.

#### Floriculture Production

The greenhouse and nursery industry is consistently among the top five sectors of Pennsylvania agriculture. The annual survey provides a measure of the floriculture portion of this industry. (The nursery portion is only measured every other year and was last done for 2000 production.)

The annual floriculture survey was recently mailed to about 1,000 producers in Pennsylvania as part of a 36-state survey across the nation. The results of the survey include information about production and average prices received for various crops: annual bedding plants, herbaceous perennials, flowering potted plants, cut flowers, cut (florist) greens, foliage plants, and propagative material.

Some growers have used the report to evaluate their own prices against the state average and surrounding states. The "Floriculture Crops, 2001 Summary" will be issued April 25, 2002 (see [www.usda.gov/nass/search.htm](http://www.usda.gov/nass/search.htm)).

#### Honey Production

This program generates state and national statistics about number of colonies, honey production, stocks on hand, and average prices.

In Pennsylvania, about 250 apiarists have already been sent the annual survey. Telephone calls will be made to nonrespondents in late January. The "Honey" report will be published Feb. 28, 2002 (see [www.usda.gov/nass/search.htm](http://www.usda.gov/nass/search.htm)).



Books and magazines of interest to Lancaster Farming readers

ANDY ANDREWS  
Editor

**TRUE NAMES, AND THE OPENING OF THE CYBERSPACE FRONTIER**, by Vernon Vinge, ed. by James Frenkel. TOR, 2001, 352 pp., \$14.95. ISBN 0-312-86207-5

Exactly how much impact has the Internet had on agriculture?

We at *Lancaster Farming* depend very heavily on the Internet for newsgathering. We could be that much less without it.

But Vinge looks at how the Internet has affected the very soul of being American — our intellectual rights, property rights, and personal privacy in an age when there are Internet companies that can track you anywhere, anytime, throughout the world.

In an age of "cookies" and banking privacy privileges, **TRUE NAMES** begins in the summer of 1979. As Vinge writes, "True Names was the first story I ever wrote with a word processor: a TECO editor running in a Heathkit LSI 11/03. For me, the writing environment was heaven on earth!" The story appeared in a Dell Binary Star "double novel" book (along with "Night-flyers" by George R.R. Martin) in early 1981. The "mere science fiction" novella, which spoke about maintaining personal privacy in an era of the Internet, was in and out of print since, Vinge noted in his introduction to the volume. And the ideas actually spurred research being conducted now.

But the future comes onto us so strongly that all industries, not just agriculture, are affected. On page 30, one of the book's contributing essayists, Danny Hillis, writes: "Our problem is that, literally, we cannot imagine the fu-

ture. The pace of technological change is so great that we cannot know what type of world we are leaving for our children. If we plant acorns, we cannot reasonably expect that our children will sit under the oak trees. Or that they will even want to. The world is changing too fast for that. . . . Much of our generation is employed at jobs our parents never imagined."

In another essay, "How is the NII Like a Prison?", Alan Wexelblat, who works for a small software company, pointed out that the formal name of the Internet is the National Information Infrastructure (NII). On page 109, Wexelblat notes how often we simply give up information for commercial transactions, and how that information can be used and processed either for — or at what times may seem against — us.

Again and again, consumer information leads inevitably to product marketing. The author notes that "in response to our manufactured needs, we will be fed a steady diet of 500+ channels, each with its content carefully labeled to avoid potentially offending anyone, just as CDs and video games are labeled and rated. These ratings will be the result of panoptic classifications and the people who buy them can expect to have their preferences recorded and analyzed so that the next offerings to reach their homes, cars, and offices will be closer to their expected tastes and values." (page 114-115).

Many references are made to the "downside" of the Internet. Authors point to the "Four Horsemen" of the NII — drug dealers, unnamed foreign terrorists, organized crime, and child pornographers. And even those troublemakers can use cryptography, and hide themselves. . . so "true names" becomes even more of an issue. . . .

A lot has come true in this book about "cyberspace, computers, and in some their direct relations to True Names," and the novella, written more than two decades ago, has developed into a sort of icon for the Internet world. The story is included here, too.

**CURIOSITY: BETTER BABY CONTESTS, The Scientific Quest For Perfect Childhood Health in the Early 20th Century**, by Annette K. Vance Dorey.

McFarland and Company, 1999, 271 pp., \$38.50. ISBN 0-7864-0617-8

In the early part of last century, believe it or not, state fairs across the country conducted "better baby" contests. Infants were poked and prodded, weighed and measured, and then rated on scale of 1-100, 100 being "perfect." Just like making Grade A cattle, there was a movement on that, through better health and infant development, "prize babies" could be made.

The movement peaked in about 1914, then faded into obscurity.

The baby health contest identified the healthiest infants in a region "while teaching parents how breeding and environment could produce a 'superior crop,'" according to McFarland and Company.

The author is an educator specializing in teacher education and parenting issues. She researched this book in the 1990s. The book has lots of photos detailing the history of the contests, who organized some of the bureaus, and the importance of maternal education in the decades since.

**KEEPING LIVESTOCK HEALTHY, Fourth Edition**, by N. Bruce Haynes, DVM. Storey Books, 2001, 348 pp., \$19.95. ISBN 1-58017-435-3

In the author's preface, the book, **KEEPING LIVESTOCK HEALTHY**, "is based on my conviction — after almost fifty years' experience in private practice, as extension veterinarian at Cornell University, and as a veterinary consultant — that the great majority of farm animal disease problems are preventable. On economic grounds alone, any sick animal — no matter how effective the treatment or how speedy the recovery — represents a loss.

"Farm animals provide us with food, fiber, financial income, and pleasure. In return, we owe them comfortable quarters, adequate feed, compassion, and good health." (page VI)

The book explains a lot about the nature of disease and how to prevent it. And the book covers a lot of ground — including overall nutrition and health, calf care, facilities, with loads of photos on proper animal husbandry. **KEEPING LIVESTOCK HEALTHY** should be part of every farm shelf.

## Pocket Computer Handy Innovation For Herd Managers

DAVE LEFEVER  
Lancaster Farming Staff

GETTYSBURG (Adams Co.) — Dairy producers had a chance to learn the details on operating a pocket computer or "palm database" that manages their cow data during a five-hour workshop put on by the Penn State extension here Dec. 18.

"It's a way to have immediate information in the barn," said Dale Brown of Jobo Holsteins, one of several Adams County dairymen at the workshop.

The PocketDairy is offered by Dairy Record Management System (DRMS), Raleigh, N.C., in conjunction with their PCDart herd management program. It offers a wide range of easily accessible data to herd managers as they go about their work.

Vinton Smith of the Penn State extension demonstrated the array of functions available on the small computer.

Managers can instantly enter

and access information on individual cows or groups of cows, including health, reproductive, and production records. Information can then easily be transferred between the PocketDairy and the PCDart computer located in the house or office.

"The functionality of (PocketDairy) is that fits into day to day work," Smith said.

Besides allowing managers to quickly check the status of individual cows, PocketDairy also allows cow data to be grouped according to specific criteria —

such as cows expected to calve within one week.

Smith said the variety of PocketDairy functions can be adapted to meet the needs of different operations, including smaller herds.

Alan Zepp, who manages a 100 cow herd near New Oxford, said he has been using PocketDairy for about 3 months. The workshop helped him understand different aspects of setting up the database, he said.

For more information about palm databases for dairy applications, contact your county extension agent.

### Farm Show Issue Deadlines

On New Year's Day, Tuesday, January 1, Lancaster Farming office will be closed. The office will reopen Wednesday, January 2.

For the January 5 Farm Show issue, there are some early deadline changes:

Public Sale and Mailbox ads, 5 p.m., Friday, December 28.

Classified, Section D ads — 4 p.m., Monday, December 31.

Classified, Section C, Farm Equipment ads, 9 a.m., Wednesday, January 2

General News — noon, Wednesday, January 2.