

Schellenger Named Acting Executive Director Of Lancaster Farmland Trust

LANCASTER (Lancaster Co.) — The board of trustees of the Lancaster Farmland Trust named Heidi Schellenger as the acting executive director of the trust at the board's monthly meeting.

"As we conduct our national search for a new executive director, we are confident that Heidi will continue to administer the business of our organization," said Lee Dmizak, chairman.

He said, "Heidi has worked as the trust's director of land preservation for the past two years, during which time she has gained extensive experience assisting farmers with the easement process. She also has assisted with numerous fundraising campaigns, managed several person-

nel hires, and has gained supervisory skills."

The private, nonprofit trust preserved a record 23 farms last year, and Schellenger hopes to continue the Trust's successes by having another record-breaking year in 2002.

"As exhilarated as I am about preserving 23 farms last year, I know that was just the tip of the iceberg, and that we still have an enormous amount of work to do," Schellenger said. "I'm excited about the Trust's prospects for this year, both in farmland preservation and in raising the funds that we need to preserve the farms. I'm enjoying the opportunity to serve as acting executive director during this stage in the Trust's progress."

From: Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
Dept. Of Agriculture Office Of The Secretary Samuel E. Hayes, Jr.
Date: January 17, 2002
To: The Honorable Ann Veneman, Secretary United States Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Ave., Suite 200A
Washington, D.C. 20250
Dear Secretary Veneman:
Greetings from Pennsylvania.

The poultry industry and agricultural economy of Pennsylvania are suffering another outbreak of H₇N₂ avian influenza.

Vaccination. The Pennsylvania Animal Health and Diagnostic Commission and the Poultry Council of the PennAg Industries Association are urgently requesting that Pennsylvania be granted authorization to use the killed H₇N₂ vaccine that was produced in 1997. I join in that request. Production of the H₇N₂ vaccine in 1997 was initiated by the PA Department of Agriculture and approved by USDA; but, it was not authorized for use in 1997. The vaccine is being tested for potency. Pennsylvania wants to use the vaccine to help stem the spread of the current infection.

The poultry industry knows the continuing question about international trade. While I do not minimize what has been a vexing trade question, we should make every effort to neutralize this long-standing impediment to our 21st Cen-

tury ability to protect our poultry industry. That issue should be eliminated so the poultry industry of Pennsylvania and the Nation can be properly protected against the continuing reoccurrence of avian influenza. However, in the most immediate sense, there will not be resolution of the international trade question. There is opportunity for some "middle ground" at the present time. For instance, we could vaccinate breeder broilers. The Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture, in cooperation with USDA and the poultry industry, is making every effort to contain this outbreak and eradicate the virus by quarantining affected premises, depopulating infected flocks, delaying the re-population of any empty house in the area, intensifying bio-security, pursuing our monitored flock program, and increasing educational efforts. We have expertise and experience. Despite these actions, this virus continues to be prevalent. To date, we have depopulated 134,500 birds and it is uncertain whether containment will be possible. As you know, avian influenza can be explosive, fast-moving, and deadly. As a minimum, vaccination within a carefully prescribed protocol to defuse the trade question while still providing a protective shield for breeder birds should be considered for at least a pilot test.

Our veterinary technical advisors from the Animal Health and Diagnostic Commission, The Pennsylvania State University, University of Pennsylvania School of Veterinary Medicine, industry and the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture, all

of whom have had extensive experience with avian influenza, strongly believe that appropriate use of vaccine could aid in the control and eradication of this outbreak.

There are 436,000 high-value breeder birds in 29 flocks in the 10-mile zone around the index case. There is a logical use for the vaccine to protect these valuable breeder birds which are not being raised for poultry meat themselves. These breeder flocks are critical in the timely and sequential re-supply of young broiler birds for the industry. They should be protected from the virus. There are millions of meat birds in the affected area.

The specific protocol for use of the vaccine and the accompanying monitoring of vaccinated flocks would be developed in cooperation with USDA. We should really work together to establish an effective 'middle ground' protocol that provides for a carefully defined vaccination program on a test basis (EX: Broiler Breeders). Should this current infection spread and gain entrance into other concentrated regions of our very large and very important poultry industry in Pennsylvania, we could be facing a situation similar to the outbreak in 1983-84 when 11,500,772 birds were lost to avian influenza. It is not a thoughtful public policy to have a totally inflexible program without any attempt to seek effective middle ground.

This most recent infection is a natural phenomenon. However, it could be introduced by international terrorists. This fact adds to the case for a vaccination protocol that could act as

a protective shield against such an invasion of our agriculture. In the event of agro-terrorism, there would be appropriate criticism of a public policy that is so inflexible it resists absolutely all efforts to vaccinate within a thoughtfully prescribed protocol as a methodology to protect our ability to propagate replacement birds and sustain our ability to produce food for the citizens of our Nation.

We are prepared to work with USDA to find a correct and pro-active public policy with regard to vaccination. It is respectfully recommended we start this process very, very soon. Please share your thoughts with me.

Live Bird Market in New York. Linked to avian influenza and the Pennsylvania poultry industry is the live bird market in New York. While it is not intended to be critical of New York, it is a fact that this live bird market is a constant source of infection and re-infection. It just happens to be in New York. For several months, USDA, PA Department of Agriculture, health professionals in adjoining states, and the poultry industry have been working to implement a plan that would attempt to systematically rid the live bird market as an insidious source of infection and re-infection. We were getting very close to the actual implementation of an eradication program late last year. Then it was delayed. It is now time to move forward again. We should not tarry. Please have USDA encourage the implementation of this bio-security effort.

Thank you very much for your assistance. I enjoy the positive relationship that exists between USDA and the PA Department of Agriculture. I greatly appreciate all of USDA's efforts. Thank you, Ann.

With warm personal regards, I remain Sincerely,
SAMUEL E. HAYES, JR.

Letter Sent To Veneman

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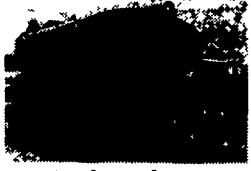
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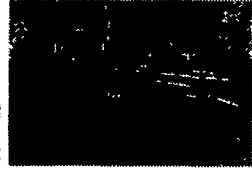
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