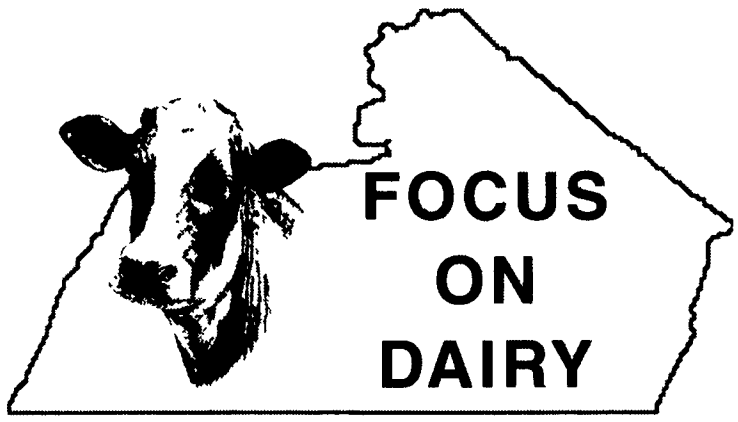

Penn State Cooperative Extension Capitol Region Dairy Team

BEDDED PACK SHELTERS

Philip E. Wagner
Extension Agent
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There has been a renewed interest by some dairy producers in bedded pack shelters for certain groups of adult dairy cattle. This housing scheme has been embraced by a group of dairy producers in the Harrisonburg, Va. area over the past couple of years with good success.

This past November, I took a van load of dairy producers to Virginia to tour four dairies in the Harrisonburg area that have built a new bedded pack facility for all or a portion of the milking herd. We had the opportunity to see several styles of shelters and building layouts. In our travels between farms, we passed four or five other dairies that have recently built or were in the process of constructing a bedded pack shelter for milk cows. A thanks goes out to Jerry Swisher, area dairy agent, Virginia Cooperative Extension, for putting the tour together.

So, why are these dairy producers choosing this housing alternative? What we heard from everyone were the words "cow comfort" and "longevity." Dairy producers with these shelters believe cows will be more comfortable and last longer than in freestall shelters. Time will tell. Initial cost savings versus a freestall shelter was mentioned by a few. However, most have sized the building so that freestalls can easily be added later if the owner decides to do so. The shelter serves as part of the manure storage system on these farms.

Sizing is critical. Shelters are designed for 100 square feet or more of pack area per cow. Once the area per cow becomes smaller, a change in the cleanliness of the animals becomes obvious. The cleanest cows appear to be those that have access to an outside sod lot in addition to the pack shelter.

All the producers we visited were using dried shavings for bedding. The supply is adequate in the area at the present time. What the supply will be in the future is always an unknown. All producers drag the pack one or more times per day with a tilling device to mix the bedding with the manure.

Some version of a modified harrow is common. The shelters have high sidewalls like modern freestall barns which offers the opportunity for good airflow to help dry the surface of the pack. All shelters had fans to aid in cooling the cows and to help dry the surface of the pack. These fans will run in cool weather after the pack is stirred to aid in drying. The herds we visited had very acceptable somatic cell counts.

Philip E. Wagner

So, are today's bedded pack shelters an option for some dairy producers? I think so. The design and management of today's shelter is much different than 40 years ago when we started moving from packs to freestalls. The goal in a pack shelter is to keep it as clean and dry as possible, just as the goal is in freestalls. This requires plenty of bedding and having 100 square feet or more of pack area per cow. Stirring the pack is essential. This generally eliminates corn fodder and straw as a bedding source.

Know what your supply of shavings is before getting serious about this shelter. Use a barrier teat dip and be sure you are getting good coverage. Before doing anything, talk to your veterinarian about the udder health issue. Get his candid opinion on whether he thinks you can manage this system. Size the building so that freestalls can be added easily at a later time if you decide to do so. Take a look at group size and how it will match thoughput at your milking parlor.

Finally, take time and visit dairy producers who are using these systems. Then come home to think about what you saw and heard, push the pencil, and make a decision if this is a management system for you.

$22 Million In Loans Approved For Rural Pennsylvania

WASHINGTON, D. C. — Agriculture Secretary Ann M. Veneman recently announced that, as part of the $22 million in loans for rural Pennsylvania, the first loan to be approved in 2002 to provide improved telecommunications service in rural America.

A $5 million loan will go to LMDS Communications, Inc., to provide enhanced telecommunication service to nearly 55 communities in western Pennsylvania and southwestern New York. A $17 million guaranteed loan has been approved for the development of the Mountain Laurel Center for Performing Arts in Pike County.

More information on USDA Rural Development can be obtained by contacting any USDA Service Center or by visiting USDA's web site at http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/

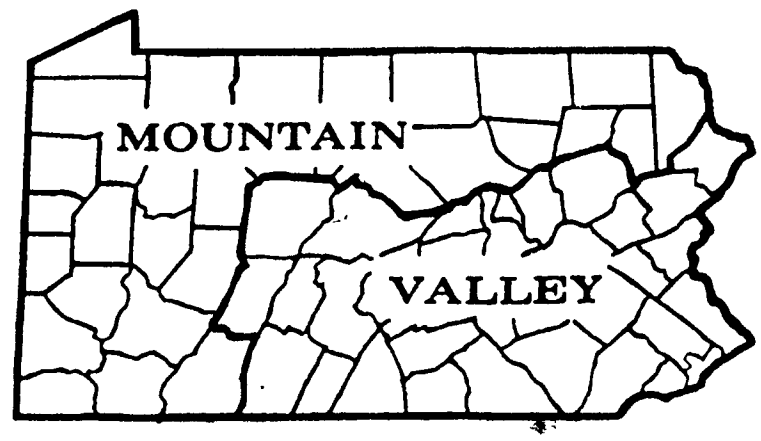
Pa. Announces 2002 Spring Custom Rates

By Scott W. Shimmin & Eric D. Stout
Agricultural Statisticians

The custom rates shown are averages from voluntary reports by custom operators and farmers throughout Pennsylvania. Most of the rates are stated per acre, cwt., ton, bale, or bushel rather than per hour to reduce the variation due to machinery size. Individual rates vary due to differences in working conditions, services performed, or even the operator's eagerness to do custom work Therefore, the average rates shown should not be considered absolute indications of fair charges.

Acreage rates are shown separately for two regions of the state, labeled "Mountain" and "Valley". The differences in rates between regions reflect differences in terrain, soils and alternative opportunities for the labor and equipment used. Figures labeled "State" represent the straight average of all reports used regardless of geographic location.

Of the 70 rates reported with year-to-year comparisons, 44 increased, 20 decreased, and 6 are the same as last year The overall average is up 9 percent from the previous year. This percentage increase was computed by adding the rates for all jobs, regardless of basis of charge, and dividing by last year's comparable total.



Custom Rates: Selected Farming Operations, Pennsylvania, 2002

Job	Basis of Charge	Mountain Section (Dollars)	Valley Section (Dollars)	State (Dollars)
		--------- Harvesting ---------		
Corn Picking	Acre	22 30	21 90	22 10
Corn Combining	Acre	26 20	24 60	25 00
Corn Drying *(23 Percent)*	Bushel	0 29	0 25	0 27
Combining Small Grains	Acre	24 50	23 90	24 10
Combining Soybeans	Acre	26 30	24 80	25 10
Hay Making				
Mowing	Acre	10 30	10 60	10 50
Mowing & Conditioning	Acre	11 20	11 80	11 50
Raking	Acre	7 70	5 80	6 40
Pick-up Baling *(Twine)*	Bale	0 45	0 44	0 44
Cut Rake Bale & Store	Bale	1 20	1 10	1 10
Large Round Baler *(Avg = 950 Lbs)*	Bale	6 80	6 20	6 40
Wrapping Bales	Bale	5 40	5 00	5 20
Silage Making				
Pull-Type Chopper & Tractor	Hour	58 30	63 20	60 90
Self Propelled Chopper	Hour	138 80	136 60	137 20
Blower	Hour	10 20	9 90	10 00
1 Man 2 Wagons 1 Tractor	Hour	41 80	44 50	43 20
2 Men 2 Wagons 2 Tractors	Hour	62 50	64 50	63 50
Field Chop Haul & Fill Silo	Ton	6 70	5 00	5 70
Bagging Silage	Foot	8 70	3 40	5 00
		--------- Plowing & Cultivating ---------		
Plowing Moldboard Plow				
Spring Stubble	Acre	12 00	12 70	12 40
Sod	Acre	13 00	14 10	13 50
Fall Stubble	Acre	11 80	12 80	12 30
Sod	Acre	12 70	14 10	13 40
Plowing Deep *(10 Inches or More)*	Acre	13 50	15 50	14 70
Plowing Chisel	Acre	11 80	12 50	12 30
Plowing Disk	Acre	12 40	12 30	12 40
Disking Tandem	Acre	11 40	11 20	11 30
With Harrow or Cultipacker	Acre	12 50	12 60	12 50
Harrowing				
Spike Tooth	Acre	9 40	8 30	8 70
Spring Tooth	Acre	9 90	9 20	9 50
Cultivating	Acre	9 10	9 10	9 10
		--------- Planting & Drilling ---------		
Planting Corn With Fertilizer				
Conventional Till	Acre	12 80	13 90	13 60
Reduced Till	Acre	14 90	14 50	14 60
No Till	Acre	15 80	15 80	15 80
Planting Soybeans Without Fertilizer				
Conventional Till	Acre	11 60	13 80	13 30
Reduced Till	Acre	15 20	15 10	15 10
No Till	Acre	16 00	15 80	15 80
Drilling Small Grain				
Without Fertilizer	Acre	11 20	13 10	12 70
With Fertilizer	Acre	11 40	13 40	12 50
With Fertilizer & Cloverseed	Acre	13 40	13 70	13 50
Seeding Alfalfa Clover Etc	Acre	11 70	14 30	13 60

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