

## Va. Association Sale Upcoming

HARRISONBURG, Va. — The first six Hereford bulls certified as Virginia's Finest by the Virginia Hereford Association (VHA) and Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (VDACS) have been consigned to the Hereford Association's annual sale on April 19, during the Virginia Beef Expo in Harrisonburg, Va.

The Virginia's Finest Trademark Program identifies and promotes outstanding Virginia agricultural products that consistently meet the high quality standards proposed by industry and approved by the Department.

Six of the twenty bulls that started the performance tests in August 2001 met the qualifications for Virginia's Finest certification and sale criteria. During the testing period each bull was monitored for rate of gain and underwent ultrasound tests for intramuscular fat, backfat and ribeye size.

Livestock Marketing Specialists from VDACS evaluated and scored each bull for muscling, structural soundness and overall quality.

"Our goal is to make the Hereford cattle industry more profitable in Virginia. We expect many of these bulls to end up in black herds, where the Hereford breed has a tremendous amount to offer in hybrid vigor," said Sid Rogers, Chairman of the VHA Bull Development Program.

The sale will take place on April 19, 2002 at 3:30 p.m. at the Rockingham County Fairgrounds in Harrisonburg, Virginia. For additional information, contact the Virginia Hereford Association at (540) 347-6663.

## Organic Mulches May Boost Transition From Plowed Land To No-Till

WOOSTER, Ohio — Farmers looking to convert their plowed land to no-till may be able to control disease pressure and improve soil fertility by spreading organic mulches such as animal manures and composts.

Ohio State University researchers have found that adding organic mulches helped to decrease the time it took to convert from plow-till to no-till, with the benefits of the mulches showing up within the first year of application.

"It usually takes a few years, two to five, to successfully convert plow-till to no-till, especially with clay soils, because there are more insect and disease problems," said Warren Dick, a soil science researcher with the Ohio Agricultural Research and Development Center (OARDC). "We found that the organic amendments helped to stimulate the microbes in the soil to counteract disease organisms and reduce their expression in the field."

Dick said that adding manures to fields to improve soil fertility is common, but using high rates of manures (or composts) to aid in the transition of plow-till to no-till is a relatively new idea. Dick will discuss how the impact of various mulches can jump start no-till practices at the Conservation Tillage and Technology Conference, Feb. 25-26 in Ada, Ohio.

Over 50 speakers from land-grant universities, the farming sector and agricultural industries and organizations will be speaking at the two-day conference. The program will cover a wide range of topics including agriculture-related panel discussions, strip till research, weed and pest management, soil fertility, GMO crops, value-added farming, crop consulting, soil and water quality issues, precision agriculture and producer programs.

"The organic mulches provide a slow release of nutrients, like nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium that tends to match the requirements of the crops through-

out the growing season," said Dick. "In our studies, we found that we didn't have the yield depressions that you normally see when planting into clay soils that had been tilled but now are being converted to no-till."

He recommends a one-time high rate mulch application of about 15-to 20 dry tons per acre and then an annual three-to five dry ton per acre application for as long as the farmer is able to apply the organic amendments. "Depending on the location of the farm, organic mulches, like animal manures and yard trimmings, are easy to come by and are cheap," said Dick. "If farmers do use organic mulches, we recommend they add the mulch in the fall to give the decomposition process time to get started."

Sixty-percent of corn and 24 percent of soybeans in Ohio are grown on no-till land. In 2000, crops were grown on over 50 million acres of no-till land throughout the country. Part of the Ohio State study was conducted at OARDC, where researchers have been managing no-till for 40 years, the longest continuously maintained no-till test plots in the world.

Registration after Feb. 11 is \$30 a day or \$40 for both days. For a copy of the agenda, registration information, or directions

to Ohio Northern University, contact the Hancock County Ohio State Extension office at (419) 422-3851 or the Allen County Soil and Water Conservation District at (419) 223-0040.

## Tee Times Golf Outing Set

UNIVERSITY PARK (Centre Co.) — The Penn State Department of Dairy and Animal Science invites you to enjoy a day of golf and fellowship at their second annual "Tee Times for Tuition" golf outing. This year's event is scheduled for Tuesday, June 18, at the Penn State Blue Course along Route 26 in State College.

Individual sponsorships start with a \$100 fee, which covers the participants' greens fees, cart, continental breakfast, and barbecue dinner. Various levels of sponsorship are available beyond the individual level, from the \$250 "event sponsor" to the "outing sponsor," which offers incentives based on each \$1,000 donated.

The primary goal is to raise money to fund student scholarships. The department's scholarship honors represent 14.3 percent of the total tuition expense for the 70 students receiving awards.

There is no rain date for the event. Preregistration is necessary. Visit <http://www.das.psu.edu> for more information on registering for "Tee Times for Tuition." If you do not have web access or if you have any questions concerning the outing, contact Sylvia Way at (814) 865-1362 or [sway@psu.edu](mailto:sway@psu.edu).

## N.Y. Legislation To Propose Ag Venture Capital Program

ALBANY, N.Y. — Assembly Agriculture Committee Chair Bill Magee (D-Nelson) is planning to introduce a bill to create the AgriDevelopment Venture Capital Program which would allow the State Comptroller to invest public retirement funds in new and existing agribusinesses.

"The agriculture industry, just like the high tech sector, is in need of the investment capital that this Program would provide," Magee said. "There is no doubt that with an infusion of equity farms, farmers and agribusinesses across the state will begin to grow in profitability and numbers."

The AgriDevelopment Venture Capital Program is patterned after a similar program enacted in 1999 which allowed the Comptroller to invest the assets of the Common Retirement Fund in privately owned businesses but is not specific to the unique needs of agriculture and perhaps has the tendency to focus more on telecommunications and high tech companies.

"Too often, agriculture is not looked at as a means to improve the state's economy, but the fact is that when you talk about the

Upstate economy you have to talk about agriculture," Magee commented. "The creation of an AgriDevelopment Venture Capital Program clearly shines the light on the need for equity investments in farming and agriculture."

Initially, the bill would allow the Comptroller to invest up to \$25 million in assets of the state's over \$100 billion Common Retirement Fund to be matched equitably by private dollars creating an investment infusion of up to \$50 million into the agriculture industry of New York State.

Among his other goals this session, Magee is pushing an agriculture agenda that provides a whole package of services for farmers, food processors, agri-marketing associations and consumers. This includes the creation of the state's first AgriDevelopment Zones; a new focus on agricultural education in schools that would entice young people to enter farming as a career; as well as the continued push on marketing "locally grown, locally known" New York agricultural products.

## NFU Urges Caution On Cattle Imports

FT. COLLINS, Colo. — National Farmers Union (NFU) has urged the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (USDA-APHIS) to use extreme caution when importing foreign cattle into the U.S.

"Wide-scale importation of foreign animals, such as commercial feeder cattle from Australia, is a bad idea," said Rocky Mountain Farmers Union President John Stencil, who testified at the APHIS public meeting in Fort Collins, Colo., on behalf of NFU. "It jeopardizes the safety of our U.S. beef supply, the health of domestic livestock and the livelihood of U.S. livestock producers."

Stencil, who represents producers from Colorado, Mexico and Wyoming, said producers are concerned about the safety of their herds and

are apprehensive about USDA's ability to protect them.

"Now is not the time to take shortcuts on health and safety protocols for imported cattle," he said. "In the wake of global reports of livestock disease outbreaks, both livestock producers and consumers are experiencing a high level of anxiety."

Stencil pointed out that USDA's Office of Inspector General (OIG) acknowledged last July that more stringent controls were needed to ensure the U.S. was not accepting meat products from countries with foot and mouth disease. The OIG also revealed that hundreds of thousands of pounds of prohibited meats were discovered in USDA-inspected warehouses.

Stringent testing and import

regulations for live cattle are critical to protecting the nation's livestock populations, Stencil said. But he also stressed that "absence of evidence is not evidence of absence" when it comes to livestock diseases.

NFU suggested that, at the very minimum, mandatory country-of-origin labeling for meat products should be enacted to better inform consumers and to potentially trace sources of contaminated products back to the country in which it was produced.

"Another significant and threatening disease that should not be overlooked is the 'disease' of market-depressing prices to the livestock industry," Stencil said. "The importation of cattle threatens the economic health of the cattle sector, as well as the entire livestock industry."

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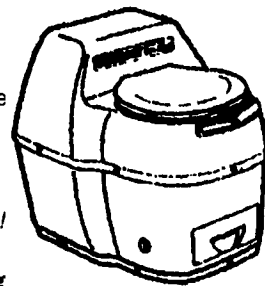
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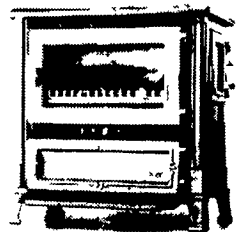
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