



From the Department of Dairy and Animal Science

This regular column from Penn State's Department of Dairy and Animal Science features the research findings, student opportunities, and reports on other important topics generated in the Department. The back issues of the column are archived on *Lancaster Farming's* Internet www.lancasterfarming.com home page. Look for them

MAXIMIZING YOUR INVESTMENTS: ACHIEVING ENVIRONMENTAL EXCELLENCE
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When nutrient management is mentioned in most any context, people immediately think of regulations, manure handling and storage, and unrealistic restrictions — basically, no positive associations. If Pennsylvania's dairy industry is to grow as an industry and allow persons to maintain a profitable business, then let's set the example for environmental stewardship by exceeding the standards.

The means to achieve this can be realistic, practical, and cost-effective. The long-term benefits can be improved public impressions of the importance of dairy to Pennsylvania.

The unfortunate truth is the majority of the population resides in urban areas and has little knowledge of what is involved in production agriculture. What they observe is at a distance and the rule of thumb that "You have only one chance to make a first impression" is very true. Our goal should be to make a great positive impression.

During the past year, Pennsylvania has been advocating PEACCE, a pilot-scale, environmentally proactive program for livestock producers. The acronym stands for Pennsylvania Environmental Agricultural Conservation Certification of Excellence. The unique aspect of the program is that various state organizations have come together with a common goal to promote environmentally safe agriculture practices among livestock producers.

The sponsors are PennAg Industries Association, Pennsylvania Association of Conservation of

PMMB Announces Milk Price

HARRISBURG (Dauphin Co.) — The Pennsylvania Milk Marketing Board (PMMB) announced the prices to be paid to Pennsylvania dairy farmers for May Class I milk (beverage) as an average of \$15.31 in the western areas of the commonwealth, and an average of \$15.80 in the central and eastern areas of the commonwealth. These prices include the over-order premium of \$1.65 per hundred weight of milk.

Farmers, whose milk production is pooled under a federal order, will receive a marketwide blend price based upon the value of all classes of milk. However, the blend price received will vary as the component composition of a farmer's milk differs from the established benchmarks of 3.5 percent butterfat, 2.99 percent protein, and 5.69 percent other solids.

servation Districts, Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture, Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection, Pennsylvania Farm Bureau, Penn State University, and USDA Natural Resource Conservation Services in Pennsylvania. PEACCE is a four-level program that is available to any livestock operation. After a producer successfully completes the certification, their farm receives a sign display that publicly recognizes their achievement.

PEACCE is a consolidation of programs developed by Penn State, the National Pork Producers Council, and Conservation District personnel from Lancaster, Chester, and Berks counties. The program is free, voluntary, confidential, and applies to single as well as multi-species operations.

On July 23, 2002 the PEACCE program will officially be released to all Pennsylvania producers, with 20 pilot farms receiving certification and a sign for successfully completing the program. This innovative program not only benefits the environment, but sends a very strong and positive public message about participating farms' environmental stewardship practices.

To qualify for the PEACCE program, producers must complete three steps. The first step of the program is a one-day educational program called the Penn State Environmental Awareness Course. The course addresses current issues, regulations, and common-sense practices in the following areas:

1. Environmental awareness, stewardship and sustainability.
2. Manure and nutrient application.
3. Odor, gaseous emissions, and nuisance issues.
4. Environmental laws and regulations in agriculture.

To date, 600 people have completed the environmental awareness course. Two thirds have been producers and one third have been conservation district and extension personnel. Approximately 25 percent of the animal

operations have been dairies.

Step 2 of the program is the nationally recognized On-Farm Assessment and Environmental Review (OFAER). America's Clean Water Foundation funds this portion of the program that is administered by Environmental Management Solutions, LLC, of Des Moines, Iowa. However, Penn State coordinates assessment applications. This voluntary, confidential, nonregulatory program conducts detailed on-farm assessments free of charge.

Two third-party assessors, trained to evaluate farms of specific species, are assigned to the farm. All biosecurity requirements are followed by the assessors. The assessment identifies environmental strengths and offers sensible recommendations for improving environmental challenges in the following areas:

1. Overall site appearance and management.
2. Building management.
3. Manure storage management and effects of odors.
4. Mortality management.
5. Nutrient management and manure application.

Originally created to assess swine farms, OFAER's successful track record prompted the 2001 adoption of the assessment by other industries. One hundred-fifty Pennsylvania livestock operations have completed the second step of the PEACCE program. Twelve of the operations have been dairies.

Producers who complete the first two steps are eligible to participate in the final third step of the PEACCE program: A conservation checklist administered by personnel from the local conservation district. Trained technicians from the county conservation district and/or Penn State Extension utilize a standard, comprehensive checklist to verify that the producer has met PEACCE requirements.

The district technician will present checklist findings and recommendations to the local conservation board that either approves or denies certification. All sponsors of PEACCE are represented on an industry board that will administer final approval. Upon certification, the farm will receive a sign and be publicly recognized for meeting and exceeding the environmental standards of the program. Eight dairy oper-

ations have successfully completed the PEACCE program and will receive certification on July 23, 2002.

The fourth step of PEACCE is maintaining certification by receiving continuing education credits and by participating in a county conservation district status review. These steps are to be completed every three years. The Livestock and Poultry Environmental Stewardship Curriculum (LPES) will be used as the continuing education tool and will be adapted to specifically fit Pennsylvania issues. LPES is a national education program that has been developed through the collaborative effort of 15 land-grant universities, the EPA Ag Center, and the USDA. The educational curriculum covers:

1. Environmental awareness.
2. Land application of manure and whole farm nutrient planning.
3. Outdoor air quality.
4. Manure storage systems.
5. Species-specific dietary strategies to reduce nutrient excretion.


PEACCE offers numerous benefits to producers. It helps identify potential environmental challenges overlooked by producers involved in day-to-day farm activities, enriches and enhances agriculture's public image, and promotes environmentally safe agricultural practices.

The program may also minimize the risk of nuisance issues and litigation.

Mark Wolfskill from Robesonia, who will receive his certification in July, summarized the program the best: "The time involved in the program was painless and I came away with an improved awareness."


If livestock producers lead by example, then this is the first step in encouraging others to take advantage of the opportunities the PEACCE program or other similar programs can provide.

More information about the program can be found on Penn State's nutrient management Website under dairy at <http://nutrient.psu.edu> or by contacting Robb Meinen at (814) 865-2987 or rjm134@psu.edu.





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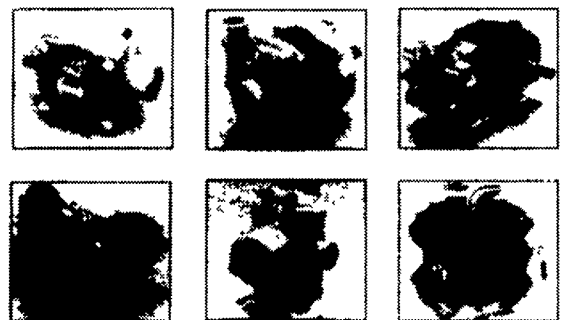
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