



# NASS

## Agriculture Counts

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*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/).*

### APPLE AND PEAR POSTHARVEST PRACTICES

Because apples and pears are considered "kids' crops," they can be under greater scrutiny concerning food safety issues. Therefore, it is important that the fruit industry has reliable and objective information about the use of agricultural chemicals applied to fruit both before and after harvest.

Previous surveys from USDA's National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) have shown that postharvest chemicals are applied at lower than the recommended label rates and to only a fraction of the crop. This information is very beneficial to the industry, as it is used to review tolerance levels for registering products under the Food Quality Protection Act (FQPA) of 1996. It is important to get the facts to other agencies so they don't assume maximum label rates are being used on the entire crop.

Postharvest chemical usage statistics have been published annually by NASS since 1998 for various fruit and field crops. Apples have only appeared in the first report and postharvest chemicals used on pears have never been studied. Trained interviewers will contact 2,100 apple and pear storage facilities across six states. In Pennsylvania,

more than 200 apple storage operators will be asked for their help with this project along with those in California, Michigan, New York, and Washington. The pear survey is limited to California, Oregon, and Washington.

The survey includes questions about chemicals used, application methods, pest management practices, volume treated, and application rates.

The Ag Chemical Usage program also includes reports about chemical applications to fruit, vegetables, and field crops before harvest. Other reports also include applications to livestock and horticultural crops.

The most recent survey about preharvest chemical applications on fruit will be published on July 17. The results of the post harvest survey will be published in March 2003. These and all other reports on this subject can be found at [www.usda.gov/nass/](http://www.usda.gov/nass/). Use the Search button to find reports about "Agricultural Chemicals" under the "Commodity" listing.

### Nursery And Floriculture Chemical Practices

The first-ever report of agricultural chemical usage on horticultural crops was released in April and revised on May 8, 2002. The entire 200-page report can be found on the Internet by following instructions in the previous paragraph.

### U.S. Cattle Counted

Cattle inventories, births, and deaths are measured twice a year — January and July. In July, about 9,500 of the largest cattle operations (including dairies) are

contacted nationwide to help establish official statistics at the national level.

In Pennsylvania, only 120 of the largest cattle and dairy operations are asked for their help with this national study. However, the January survey includes many more farms from Pennsylvania and across the nation to provide enough detail to publish state level statistics for Pennsylvania and other states.

The cattle statistics program also includes reports detailing cattle on feed, average prices received by growers, production, disposition and income, slaughter statistics, and beef products in cold storage. The results of cattle surveys can be found at [www.usda.gov/nass/](http://www.usda.gov/nass/). Use the Search button to find the next "Cattle" report issued on July 19.

### Crop And Fruit Yields Forecasted

From May to November, NASS publishes the official USDA yield and production forecasts for the major field crops and tree fruits in Pennsylvania and around the country. Forecasts are based on responses to periodic fruit surveys and monthly Ag Yield Surveys when farmers estimate expected yields from their own fields.

Forecasted crops include winter wheat, barley, oats, corn for grain, soybeans, sorghum, hay, hay stocks, apples, peaches, pears, and cherries.

We ask growers because they are the best source of information about the crops they grow. They see the crop develop daily and they have the best idea of how the weather is affecting their crop. Using their years of experience, they can make the best estimate of their expected yields based on current crop conditions.

It is too risky to use weather predictions when setting yield forecasts. Forecasts are based on information from farmers who must assume that average condi-

tions will prevail through the end of the season. Potential lower yields from drought, flood, or other poor growing conditions are reflected in the following months' yield surveys.

Each month we ask about different crops depending on their stage of growth. In Pennsylvania, we ask 150-600 growers for their help with the Ag Yield Survey, depending on the field crops included that particular month. Fruit forecast surveys are sent to all known fruit producers across Pennsylvania.

These production forecasts give an important advance warning of the size of each crop in

Pennsylvania and across the nation. For example, if a large crop is expected, contract harvesters, packers, transportation companies, and storage facilities must be ready to handle the extra volume. A small crop warns about the possible need to plan for alternate livestock feed sources or farmer-assistance programs such as the 1999 Drought Assistance Program.

The results of field crop and fruit yield surveys can be found at [www.usda.gov/nass/](http://www.usda.gov/nass/). Use the Search button to find the "Crop Production" report issued around the 10th of each month and the "Cherry Production" report scheduled for July 1.

## National Animal Identification Task Force Formed

BOWLING GREEN, Ky. — The National Institute for Animal Agriculture (NIAA) has announced the formation of a task force to facilitate the advancement of animal identification in the U.S.

The National Food Animal Identification Task Force was established in April and conducted its first teleconference meeting in May. Task Force members will gather in Chicago in June where six working groups of the task force will meet and discuss various aspects of a national plan.

According to Neil Hammerschmidt, COO of the Wisconsin Livestock Identification Consortium and chair of NIAA's Animal Identification and Information Systems Committee, the mission of the task force is "to ensure the United States has an adequate animal identification system that supports the financial viability of animal agriculture."

"This stakeholder-based task force has the challenge to collectively develop a national identification plan that provides the essential elements of a national program," said Hammerschmidt, "that can be implemented timely and cost effectively."

Hammerschmidt said the task force is a unified effort involving industry and government. More than 25 industry organizations and a few government agencies have accepted NIAA's invitation to participate on the task force. In all, more than 75 individuals are serving on the various working groups.

Hammerschmidt pointed out that several animal identification work groups and entities have made significant progress during the past year. "The intent of this task force is not to duplicate such efforts, but to incorporate them into a broad plan that provides greater opportunity for a national program," he said. "The vast leadership coming to grips with the key issues across the entire industry is what makes this effort outstanding." The issue-based working groups are co-chaired by 10 industry leaders throughout animal agriculture.

Dr. Mark Engle, with the National Pork Board, who vice chairs the NIAA Animal Identification and Information Systems Committee, said the task force will present a preliminary report during ID/Info Expo 2002, a conference and trade show devoted to the issue of animal identification and information systems. During this event, scheduled for July 28-Aug. 1, the National Food Animal Identification Symposium will provide a forum to advance the national plan for animal identification and consider the recommendations of the task force.

After feedback is collected from the symposium, Engle said, the task force will meet again and consider any revisions before presenting their final recommendations for a national plan at the U.S. Animal Health Association meeting scheduled for October in St. Louis.

Hammerschmidt and Engle's goal is to have a national plan defined by the end of the year.

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Marjorie

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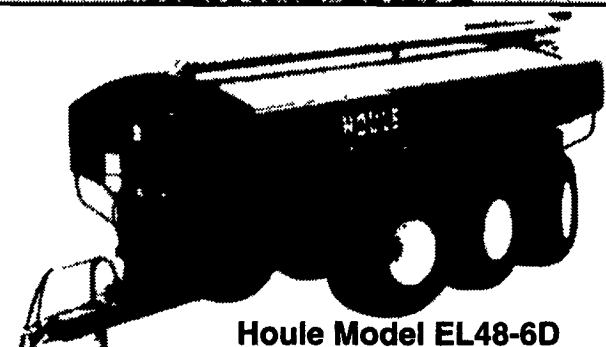
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