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National Farmers' Market Week — Aug. 4-10 — recognizes 3,000 farmers' markets that operate seasonally or year-round. One of these is Oak Grove Farms, a family business with 220 acres in produce grown for their farm market and wholesale business. From left are Dwayne Lebo, who oversees the growing operation, his sister Linette in charge of the store and greenhouses, and his mother who keeps the home bakery thriving. His dad, Paul, is in charge of wholesale sales and does a lot of the on-farm tractor work, and a brother Brian is in charge of route deliveries. See page B2 for more about this growing family business. Photo by Lou Ann Good, food and family features editor

PMMB Maintains Over-Order Premium Board Member: 'Tough Decision'

DAVE LEFEVER
Lancaster Farming Staff

HARRISBURG (Dauphin Co.) — The Pennsylvania Milk Marketing Board (PMMB) voted this week to uphold the state's \$1.65 per hundredweight over-order premium paid to producers, despite a petition from milk dealers that it be lowered to remain competitive in the marketplace.

The over-order premium is the amount paid above the federally mandated price to Pennsylvania dairy farmers for fluid milk produced, processed, and sold within the state.

Luke Brubaker, PMMB mem-

ber and Mount Joy dairy farmer, said the board's 3-0 vote was in response to a depressed milk market.

"Farmers right now are in a tight crunch," he said. "Milk prices are as low as they've been in the last few years."

The \$1.65 premium is scheduled to expire at the end of December.

In a July 30 hearing before the PMMB, the Pennsylvania Association of Milk Dealers (PAMD) had asked that the premium be lowered to \$1.25. The PAMD testified that the \$1.65 premium was threatening to drive buyers of Pennsylvania milk to some sur-

rounding states where over-order premiums are less than \$1 per hundredweight, according to Earl Fink, PAMD executive vice president.

Joel Rotz, dairy specialist with the Pennsylvania Farm Bureau (PFB), testified in favor of maintaining the \$1.65 premium, pointing to declining milk prices and that no significant drop in production cost is expected. He noted that production and cow numbers have decreased from last year, and that drought and heat are taking a toll on Pennsylvania dairy farms.

According to Brubaker, the aim of the over-order premium is

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Office Closed Labor Day

On Labor Day, Monday, Sept. 2, *Lancaster Farming* office is closed. The office will open Tuesday, Sept. 3.

For the Sept. 7 issue, there are some deadline changes:

Public Sale and Mailbox ads, 5 p.m., Friday, Aug. 30.

Classified, Section D ads — 5 p.m., Wednesday, Sept. 4.

Classified, Section C, Farm Equipment ads, 9 a.m., Wednesday, Sept. 4.

General News — noon, Thursday, Sept. 5.

Dairy Program Sign-Up To Begin

Teleconference Panelists Give Farm Bill Update

DAVE LEFEVER

Lancaster Farming Staff

UNIVERSITY PARK (Centre Co.) — Dairy producers should be able to start signing up for market loss payments under the new Farm Bill this coming week.

Jackie Stonfer of the USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) in Harrisburg said that Tuesday, Aug. 13, has been set as the official start of the sign-up, but agents will probably not be able to begin processing applications quite that soon.

Sign-ups will most likely begin "by the end of (the coming) week," Stonfer said. Farmers can then expect payment within 60 days of applying — or about mid-October.

This first lump sum payment will be retroactive from Dec. 1, 2001, for eligible milk production up to 2.4 million pounds, the annual cap set on the program. Payment rates are 45 percent of the difference between \$16.94 per hundredweight and the Boston Class I price for months when the price was lower.

For milk that will be produced during the coming fiscal year from Oct. 1, 2002 to Sept. 30 of 2003, dairy producers can select the month they want to start receiving payments for eligible production, according to Dann Stuart, FSA chief of public affairs. Farmers signing up this month will be asked to select the month they want payments to begin, but will have until Sept. 30 to change their selection, Stuart said.

Stonfer said that dairy farmers can ensure that they are ready for the sign-up beforehand.

"One thing you could do prior

to sign-up is make sure you have a conservation plan," she said. Conservation plans are required for any farm to be eligible for funds.

"At this point, you just need to sign a form for the NRCS (Natural Resources Conservation Service) to come out and determine if your farm needs any special practices," she said.

Procedures have not yet been established that might allow dairy farmers from groups such as the Amish to receive the subsidies via their milk cooperatives, Stonfer said.

Stonfer joined a panel of Farm Bill analysts Tuesday in a teleconference broadcasted from Penn State to various extension offices across the state.

The painstaking political process of working out details of the Farm Bill creates a lot of uncertainty about exactly how the various programs will be administered, Stonfer noted. Numerous USDA agents and attorneys are involved in the process of distributing the \$170 billion earmarked for agriculture over the next six years.

"It has to go through so many people to get approval," Stonfer said.

Ken Bailey, Penn State dairy economist, noted that the process helps to ensure funds are distributed as fairly as possible.

"(Administrators) want to make sure that a year from now this program isn't on '60 Minutes' or something," Bailey said.

Several questions from listeners had to do with the reorganization

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Samantha Rabenold won overall grand champion at Reading Fair's swine show Monday with her homebred hog. Larry Arnold, Womelsdorf, judged the show. See story page B12. Photo by Michelle Kunjappu



Grand champion Chester County Roundup market lamb, exhibited by Julia Howe, sold for \$10 a pound to Doug Howe, AcryLabs, Honey Brook. Julia will be donating all proceeds of the sale to the Casa Barnabe Orphanage in Guatemala. Read more about the roundup on page A28. Photo by Andy Andrews, editor