

## Survey Will Measure Farm Financial Health

**HARRISBURG** (Dauphin Co.) — Farmers of Pennsylvania will have the chance to help farm organizations, agribusiness, and Congress in evaluating financial performance of farm or ranch businesses by participating in the 2002 Agricultural Resource Management Survey.

This survey provides vital statistics about the economic condition of production agriculture. These statistics will also help the agriculture community and Congress make policy decisions affecting agriculture.

Data collected will present the only objective, true picture of the financial well-being of farm operators in the U.S. and is used in developing legislation such as the 2002 Farm Bill. These data are also a resource when policymakers determine Federal assistance. In 2001, direct government payments totaled \$103.6 million for Pennsylvania and \$20.2 billion for the U.S., down 12 percent from the previous year.

Approximately 375 Pennsylvania agricultural producers have been chosen to participate in these surveys. Participation in this survey is a very important contribution to the overall welfare of Pennsylvania's farmers. All individual data collected are held strictly confidential by law (Title 7, U.S. Code). Only statistical totals are published for selected geographic regions and the Nation.

Producers chosen to participate in the 2002 Agricultural Resource Management Study will be visited by an interviewer between February and April to complete the report at the farm operator's convenience.

Results from these surveys will be used by farm and ranch operators, farm organizations, commodity groups, lenders, university researchers, news media, local USDA agencies, farm suppliers, and others to compute prices paid, evaluate economic challenges facing America's food and fiber producers, determine the need for farm assistance, measure the cost of agricultural production, and assess the ability for producers to maintain sustainable farms.

"Farm Production Expenditures" will be released July 17. For a copy of the finished report or to obtain other agricultural statistics, visit the Pennsylvania Agricultural Statistics Service Website at [www.usda.gov/nass/](http://www.usda.gov/nass/).

## Mycoplasma, Feeder Cattle

(Continued from Page A1)

period "will be the same as his buddies," he said.

Catching up, though, comes at a cost, as feeders suffering from mycoplasma infection may lose 50 marbling points at the packing house.

"That's half a grade," said Griffin.

"It doesn't just affect lungs. We also know it affects joints, and in a cow herd we know it causes mastitis," he said.

Difficulties with mycoplasma are "not an uncommon problem in well-managed cattle." Therefore "I think we must assume that are cattle are exposed through their mother's milk or from being commingled in the feedyard," he said.

Additionally, "We almost always see associated diseases" such as coccidia colitis, renal congestion, liver zonal congestion, or central nervous system (CNS) congestion.

Most producers follow the "seek and treat" method of ferreting out illness in cattle. However even experienced eyes can miss calves that are running a temperature or are in the beginning stages of mycoplasma infection.

The problem may be more widespread. "Day in and day out, we see those lesions," he said. "They are in 30 percent of the cattle we look at."

"It's a significant problem from a performance standpoint because the cattle don't do well."

Respiratory disease was found in 72 percent of sick cattle, which created scarring in their lungs. In addition, in Griffin's observances in the packing house, 58 percent of cattle not identified as sick also had lesions in their lung.



At far right Dr. Dee Griffin, beef production management veterinarian at the University of Nebraska, shares his knowledge of mycoplasma with producers at a recent meeting.

With prevention, "isolation is a big deal," he said. He further recommended vaccinating at four weeks with all vaccines boosted before the calves leave the farm. Griffin does not use a killed vaccine.

He also was a proponent of keeping movement to a minimum, advising producers to "minimize hospital commingling" at the feedlot.

"It's best if the cattle were never removed from their home pen to be treated. At the very least, treat using a multiple-day antibiotic and return the animal to the home pen without commingling with other cattle," he said.

As for vaccine, "our best information says that the vaccine response takes four weeks, and that just doesn't seem like a reasonable option,"

he said.

Mass medicating the animals off the truck, through injection or feed, may be costly but does result in mycoplasma-free animals. "Sometimes the value doesn't pay for the cost, but I've never had a truck (of cattle) go bad," said Griffin. "The number one dilemma is to figure out who is at risk, but the good side is that if you are really paying attention, you might have a little time" to pick up on the infection early.

"It's tough on a pen basis. We're talking about really having to pay attention. Your real issue is going to be in that first three weeks in which the problem starts," he said.

Intake decrease could be the first indicator of a problem, he

said.

Recognizing mycoplasmas in the early stages yields good response to therapy, "but don't let them get lost in the pen" and stop treatment, he said.

If a producer catches a mycoplasma infection early, they may need to mass medicate through the feed, because earlier on may be the time of most rapid dissemination, according to Griffin.

"The bottom line is, I think you have to assume that there is a pretty high carrier rate. Your best shot is to isolate," he said.

"The way I'm looking at cattle is, 'I don't care where you're from or how good you're backgrounded, you may have it,'" he said.



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