

# Farm Transfer Workshops Reach Out To N.Y.'s Small Farms

## Adam Matthews Cornell Small Farms Program

According to the "Dairy Farm Business Summary," the average age of the principal operators and owners of small farms in New York State is 50 years. Cornell Cooperative Extension farm management educators from across the state have been looking for ways to help ensure that these farms will be passed on to the next generation. Farm transfer is something that takes careful planning and a long period of time to implement, but owners of small farm businesses, with their limited time for both management and daily tasks, are particularly challenged.

Steve Richards, director of the New York FarmLink Program, was well acquainted with the importance of education in the successful transfer of small farms. New York FarmLink was created in 1996 to bring exiting farm owners into contact with interested farm-seekers. Richards helped create a database to keep track of both owners and seekers in the farm transfer process.

The FarmLink database shows that 93 percent of participants are small farms. Two recent surveys of participants showed that all parties were interested in further education on farm transfer topics. Richards was also aware that at the NY FarmNet toll-free help-line, one out of every three calls is a request for information regarding farm transfer and that 85 percent of all calls to FarmNet in 2001 were from small farms.

Richards knew that FarmLink was a good idea, but he saw that improvements could be made in the area of owner/seeker networking and education. He worked with a group of CCE farm management educators from across New York State to put together a proposal to Cornell's Small Farms Program. The group received a CCE grant for innovative small farm education

for their "Farm Transfer Education Project."

The group hoped to bring farm owners and farm seekers together for joint education. Seekers would become better prepared to write a business plan, create a resume, and complete a loan application. Owners would become better prepared in presenting their farm to seekers and would be made aware of the options in farm transfer that are available to them. Both owners and seekers would be linked with local resources for farm transfer, and Cooperative extension educators would be linked with on-campus resources for farm transfer (FarmLink).

### Regional Workshops

Prior to the workshops, Richards and his colleagues had developed resource materials, including a "Senior Business Transfer Guide" for exiting farmers, a "Junior Business Transfer Guide" for beginning farmers, and a "Facilitator's Guide." They also contacted farmers so that they could help decide the agenda of the programs based on their questions and their situations (what stage of farm transfer they were in). Local agents polled farm families on their needs as well as the best time and location for their programs.

Richards organized a training for farm transfer facilitators in September 2002 at the Wyndham Hotel in Syracuse. All of the CCE farm management educators involved in the regional programs attended. The group reviewed draft materials and began planning a series of regional workshops.

The group agreed that one of their main objectives was to help farm owners and farm seekers recognize that farm transfer is a process, and to see the value of the entire process, not just the final agreement. Personal issues are all-important, and need to be discussed prior to an agreement.

Organizers also wanted to show farmers that there are people available to help with the farm transfer process. FarmNet consultants, CCE educators and other professionals are available to help with discussions, and the new workbooks provide a valuable framework for planning.

### Results

Eight farm transfer workshops were conducted across the state during November and December, 2002. A total of 51 families — 137 individuals — attended the series of workshops. The audience was predominantly dairy and predominantly small farms, although the advertising was targeted to a more general audience. Some owners of larger farms were in attendance, as well as two beginning farmers.

As a result of the workshops, some farmers are already starting the process of farm transfer. One participant sold his dairy herd, another put a farm transfer agreement into place, and a third sought the help of a grazing expert to make his operations more viable for a transfer to his son. Also, a number of farmers are actively using the workbooks to help them along in the farm transfer process.

Workshop facilitators believe that the method of teaching by informal discussion was a key to success. Participants indicated that they gained a lot of insight from other participants. Joan Petzen, Allegany County CCE, saw the benefits of this approach immediately:

"In South Dayton, splitting the group into different generations helped both (owners and seekers) realize that their goals were similar, which they hadn't realized prior to the seminar." Petzen says that in the Belmont workshop, the real-life example of a young couple seeking to take over the family farm served as a focal point for the discussion. The group shared ideas while working

to help this young couple develop a strategy for moving the transfer process forward.

Because the personal side of farm transfers was included along with the necessary technical tools and information, attendees were able to gain an understanding that many others struggle with as they work toward transferring farm businesses. A primary key to success was giving people plenty of time to share ideas, discuss them, and ask questions of one another.

To follow up the success of the workshops, CCE farm management educators plan to repeat the course offering in the future, help to facilitate farm transfers, and provide both farm owners and farm seekers additional individu-

al attention.

For more information on farm transfer issues, contact your local Cornell Cooperative Extension office. For information about the New York FarmLink Program, contact Steve Richards at (800) 547-3276, str4@cornell.edu. For general small farm information, visit Cornell's Small Farms Program Website at [www.smallfarms.cornell.edu](http://www.smallfarms.cornell.edu).

The "Senior Business Transfer Guide" for exiting farmers, "Junior Business Transfer Guide" for beginning farmers, and a "Facilitator's Guide" can be ordered by calling the NY FarmLink Program at (800) 547-3276. The cost is just \$10 to cover printing and postage.

## Plan Your Farm's Financial Future

UNIVERSITY PARK (Centre Co.) — Every farmer who ever experiences a cash-flow problem needs to carefully plan the cash flow projection for the farm for at least the next 12 months.

The FINPACK Annual Subscription Program, available with the release of FINPACK 2003, gives the personal version of FINPACK for one year for \$99.

It includes the full working version of FINPACK, technical support, and internet patches. During 2003, you would be able to update your balance sheets, evaluate "what if" FINLRB plans, create FIN-LO cash flow plans, and complete FINAN year end financial analyses.

For more details on software options give CFFM at Minnesota a call at (800) 234-1111 or visit their website at <http://www.cffm.umn.edu/>.

Penn State Extension will offer two days of practical FINPACK hands-on computer training March 4 and 5 at Cumberland County Extension Office to the first 10 paid registrants.

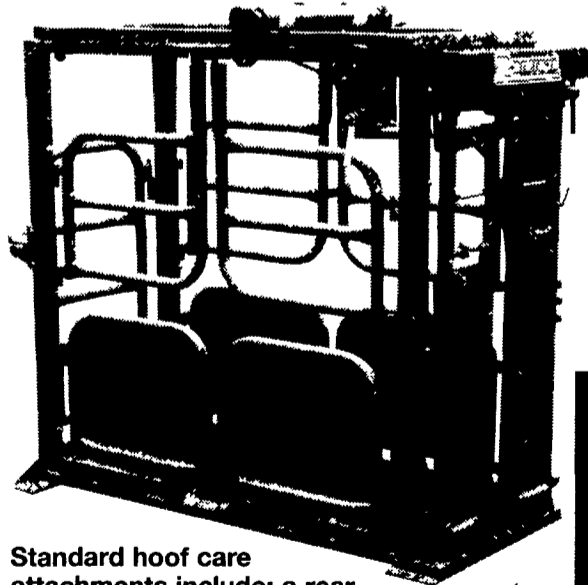
Participants should have a basic understanding of Windows before taking this class.

The program will be repeated at the Lancaster Farm and Home Center, March 18 and 19. For Lancaster please register by March 10. Training will run from 9:30 a.m. to 3p.m. each day. The fee will be \$50 per participant for two days.

Hands-on training will cover preparation of the computerized tools for financial control: Balance Sheet, Enterprise Budgets, Long-range (strategic) Plans, Cash-flow Planning and Financial Analysis. Please register early for this great opportunity to take control of your farm finances. Call Roland Freund or Laura Watts at 717-240-6500 for more information on the training.

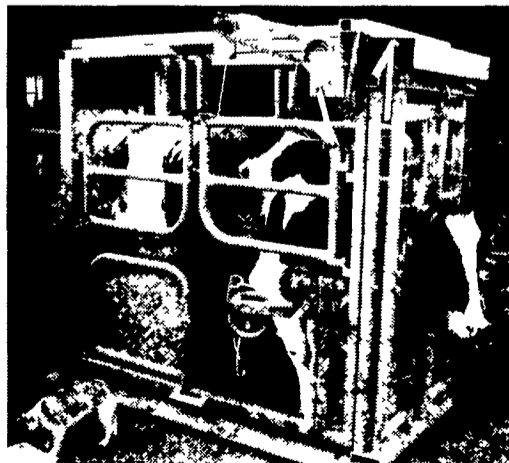
Paul B. **Zimmerman** INC.

### Combination Hoof Care/Vet Chute



This highly versatile equipment can be used to secure a cow safely and efficiently for foot care or veterinary services.

Side panels and gates easily replace hoof care accessories to create a vet chute where almost any common vet procedure can be performed.



Once in the chute with the belly band winched into working position, the cow is safely secured for foot treatment

Standard hoof care attachments include; a rear splatter board, rear foot winch, two front foot winches and a full width belly band and winch to lift the animals weight off their feet. All winches have heavy duty friction brakes providing constant, positive holding action.

**ALL STEEL PARTS ARE POWDER COATED USING THE PBZ FIVE-STEP PROCESS.**

**Paul B. Zimmerman, Inc.**

295 Woodcorner Road • Lititz, PA 17543

**717/738-7365**  
1 mile west of Ephrata

Call or write for additional information and the name of your nearest dealer

Hours  
Mon - Fri 7-5

Experience the Difference with Husqvarna!!

**Husqvarna SAVINGS!!**

### 225B Blower

- E-tech™ engine
- 1.5 cu in - 25 cc
- Air velocity 128 mph
- Lifetime ignition warranty on all equipment



**\$169<sup>95</sup>**

Also Available Back Pack Blower 40CC & 175 MPH

**\$289<sup>95</sup>**

### 136 Chain Saw - 16"

- 3.6 cu in - 2.2 hp
- Inertia chain brake
- Lifetime ignition warranty



**All Commercial Built Chain Saws**

With Air Injection Starting At

**\$169<sup>95</sup>**

New Chains For \$15.00  
Premium Bar & Chain Oil \$4.15

**Holtwood Supply**

1010 Susquehannock Dr., Holtwood, PA 17532,  
2-1/2 Miles West of The Buck,  
Just off Rt 372  
(717) 284-0883

**Dave's Lawn & Garden**

158 Doe Run Rd  
Manheim, PA 17545  
(717) 665-5501

**Zook Engines**

4309 Reservoir Rd.,  
Honeybrook, PA 19344  
Off of Rt 322  
(610) 273-3028

**Mascot Sharpening**

434 Newport Rd, Ronks PA 17572  
2-1/2 Miles Below Rt 23 on Rt 772  
(717) 656-6486