

Sign-Up Dates Set For Ag Aid Benefits

WASHINGTON, D.C. — In the first phase of agriculture assistance implementation authorized under the Agricultural Assistance Act of 2003, Agriculture Secretary Ann M. Veneman last week announced that sign-up for the expanded Livestock Compensation Program will begin April 1.

The Tobacco Payment Program benefit sign-up will begin March 17. Veneman said the implementation team is working on details regarding other program benefits and said information about these other sign-up dates will be announced in the near future.

USDA has also launched a website, located at www.usda.gov, that provides producers one location for details on these programs, questions and answers, allows for comments and suggestions on program implementation, as well as other information on USDA agriculture assistance.

"USDA is committed to providing these disaster program benefits to producers as quickly as possible and today's announcement is the first step in meeting those expectations," said Veneman. "Our implementation team is examining ways to cut the red tape and expedite the process where possible and the new website provides the ability for producers to make suggestions on

how we might work more efficiently in meeting that goal."

Both the LCP and the TOPP programs can begin quickly because program systems are in place and the programs are relatively easy to administer.

LCP sign-up will begin on April 1 and is scheduled to end early June, 2003. The Act expands LCP by including additional counties that were approved under a Secretarial disaster designation or Presidential disaster declaration for damages and losses due to any natural disaster. The Act also includes catfish as an eligible commodity.

Previously under LCP, a county must have been named as a primary county under a Secretarial disaster designation between Jan. 1, 2001, and Sept. 19, 2002, only for drought. The Act expands LCP to make eligible any counties that were requested as primary disaster areas under a Presidential or Secretarial declaration by Feb. 20, and that were subsequently approved.

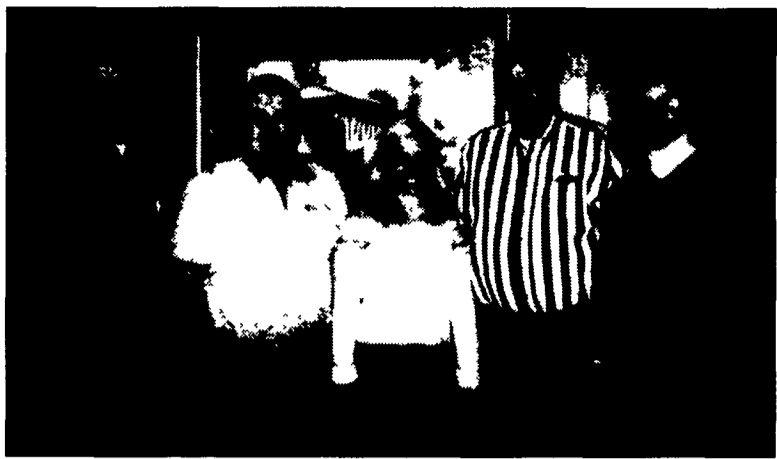
To be eligible for LCP assistance, a producer's livestock operation headquarters must be physically located in a county with a qualifying disaster designation. Eligible livestock are cattle, sheep, goats, and buffalo, as well as catfish. Counties named as contiguous counties are not eligible for the program. LCP pay-

ments will be based on losses per head or number of eligible livestock and catfish.

To sign up for LCP assistance, eligible producers should visit their local FSA offices on April 1. USDA anticipates more than 700 additional counties will be made eligible for LCP under the Act. LCP was originally administered in 2,149 counties.

Sign-up for TOPP will begin March 17 and is scheduled to end May 16. The program provides an estimated \$53 million to tobacco producers. Eligible applicants are quota holders and producers of all kinds of tobacco under USDA's 2002 tobacco program. Payments are expected to be issued between mid-May and June 1. To apply for TOPP assistance, eligible persons should visit their local USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA) offices beginning March 17.

The Act, signed into law on Feb. 20, authorizes total disaster aid estimated at \$3.1 billion for producers suffering from natural disasters and related conditions. USDA will announce sign-up as quickly as possible for other assistance provided by the Act, including the crop disaster program that reimburses producers for qualifying crop losses in either 2001 or 2002 due to damaging weather or related conditions.



Pictured left to right is Dustin Heeter, vice president; Michael Firestine, president; Margeaux Firestine, 2003 National Polled Hereford Queen; Robert Glenn, treasurer; and Janice Engle, secretary.

Pa. Hereford Association Conducts Winter Meeting

BEDFORD (Bedford Co.) — The Pennsylvania Hereford Association conducted their winter board meeting February 15 in Bedford.

Officers elected included Michael Firestine, president; Dustin Heeter, vice president; Janice Engle, secretary; and Robert Glenn, treasurer.

Directors elected for a three-year term include Dan Kniffen, Larry Pettit, Terry Shearer, Larry Chaikcic, and Robert Glenn.

Special recognition was given to the 2003 National Polled Hereford Queen, Margeaux Firestine. She is the first national queen from Pennsylvania.

The Keystone International Livestock Exposition (KILE) has been designated as a National Hereford Show. This is the first national show to be held in the eastern United States. The show will be on Sunday, October 5. There will also be a Hereford Sale conducted at KILE on Friday, October 3 at 1 p.m.

C.J. Furlong will be hosting the Spring Grass Time Hereford Sale. This event will take place

on Saturday, May 17 and will be conducted at Furlong's ranch in Salunga.

Furlong reported there are 54 lots consigned: 8 bulls, 22 cow-calf pairs, and 24 heifers.

Martene Firestine reported that the Junior Hereford Association had 50 members as of December 31, 2002. The Junior Preview Show is tentatively scheduled for April 26.

Steve Reichard is compiling information for the 2003 Directory. Anyone interested in placing an ad must do so by March 31.

Membership dues for 2003 are to be mailed to Frank Granberry, HCR72, Box 32B, Richfield, PA 17086.

C. J. Furlong commended Dennis Grumbine for a successful Farm Show. He will recommend having the beef breeds rotate show days.

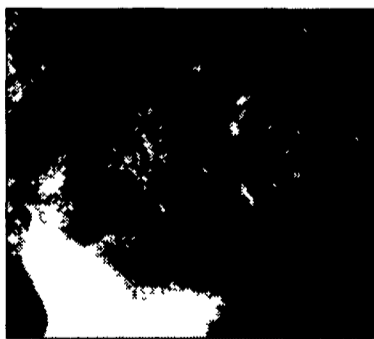
Meeting was adjourned at 3:30 p.m.

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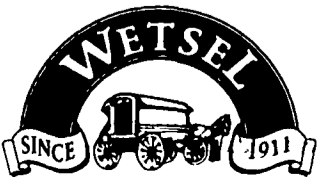


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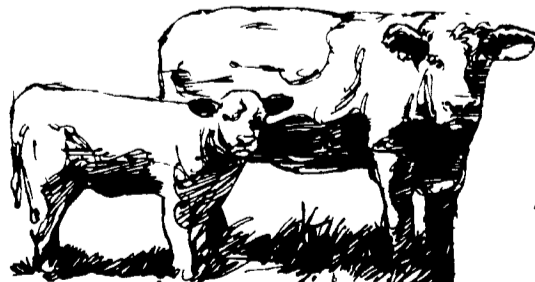
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