

Work Group Focuses On Education Of Horse Owners

HARRISBURG (Dauphin Co.) — The Small Scale Non-Production Livestock Work Group was formed in December 2000 to address the water quality, nutrient runoff, and erosion concerns that can arise from animal operations, particularly equine operations, when proper pasture management, manure management and runoff controls are not practiced.

Animal operations that raise livestock for production purposes (wool, meat, milk, eggs, etc.) are subject to the statewide Nutrient Management Act (NMA) regulations.

Equine operations, unless it is a breeding operation, are not currently addressed under

the NMA, and that lead some municipalities in Pennsylvania to start asking for guidance about how to handle these operations.

In the future, equine operations are expected to be included in the NMA regulations, however, it is also expected that smaller operations will not be covered. To stay current with the NMA regulations, check out <http://panutrientmgmt.cas.psu.edu>.

The Small Scale Non-Production Livestock Work Group is comprised of representatives from various county Conservation Districts, the PA Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), USDA Nat-

ural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), the PA State Conservation Commission, Penn State University Cooperative Extension Service, the PA Ombudsman Program, municipal representatives, York County Planning Commission, and various livestock organizations.

The work group felt that the majority of animal owners who have environmental concerns, such as nutrient runoff, erosion, and pasture management concerns want to "do the right thing" but are not aware of what to do to correct their environmental problems or where to go for help. The work group felt that education would be a more powerful and effective way to deal with this than more regulations would be.

The goals and objectives of the work group have been two-fold. The first efforts of the work group have been to create statewide zoning guidelines to give municipalities across the state a set of guidelines to work with when creating zoning ordinances dealing with small scale (typically equine) operations.

The work group deliberated for almost two years to be sure the guidelines would consider the care and keeping of horses while protecting the environment.

The guidelines are expected to debut in early April.

The second goal of this work group is to do an aggressive educational and outreach campaign in Pennsylvania. The work group is working to greatly improve the educational materials available in Pennsylvania that show animal owners what Best Management Practices (BMPs) are available to improve their current operation.

Issues such as proper pasture management, proper manure management, water quality concerns, eliminating muddy areas, and composting options are being addressed. These are intended to improve the health and safety of the animals, as well as reduce the pollution potential that some small scale animal operations create.

The work group also intends to educate the technical staff in Pennsylvania's agricultural agencies that typically work with animal opera-

tions about the special issues that may need to be addressed when they are working with an equine operation.

These agencies, such as your county Conservation District, local USDA NRCS or local Penn State Cooperative Extension service personnel are typically accustomed to working with cattle, swine and poultry operations. However, these agencies are available to assist the equine operations as well.

The educational information that is being developed through the efforts of this work group will be available at Ag Progress Days in August, in Rockspring. Limited copies are currently available by contacting Amy Skvarka at (717) 240-5360.

For more information about the efforts of this work group, contact Shelly Dehoff at (717) 880-0848.

Pa. 4-H Leaders Recognized

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At the state level, her club members have placed first in public speaking, team demonstration, or individual demonstration for many years.

Several Penn State extension educators also participated in the symposium. Pat Comerford, Penn State Extension Horse Specialist and Nancy Kadwill, Montgomery County 4-H agent, represent Penn State on the AYHC board of directors and participated in several AYHC functions during the weekend.

Comerford and Donna

Zang, Butler County Extension Director, presented a session on youth horse safety. Zang also conducted a seminar on using the Survivor Game theme for teaching horsemanship skills, and Nancy presented a program on Winter Horse Camps.

Brian Egan, Penn State Equine Extension Associate provided information in two sessions on equine behavior and horse handling and training.

The 2004 AYHC National Youth Horse Leaders Symposium will be held in Fort Worth, Texas.

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