

Milk Tester

(Continued from Page A43)

western Lancaster County.

About 12 years ago, his circuit returned to the eastern half of the county, in the areas around New Holland and Farmersville.

Risser recounted changes in milk testing technology and dairy production over the past 50 years.

At the beginning of his career, Risser said, a herd producing an average of 400 pounds of butterfat per cow was doing well. Today, a herd needs to average close to 1,000 pounds butterfat (with corresponding milk production) to be considered "good," Risser said. Advances in artificial insemination (AI) and genetics, herd management, and feeding are the chief reasons for the production increases, according to Risser.

For many years, testing for butterfat was one of the most time-consuming parts of Risser's job. Equipped with a portable, electric-powered centrifuge and a jug of sulfuric acid, he conducted the butterfat tests for each cow himself — right on the farm. The process involved "spinning" each milk sample twice in the 24-sample centrifuge, along with specified amounts of sulfuric acid and hot water. Spinning the mixture caused the fat to rise into the narrow neck of a special sample container. The butterfat percentage was read by using graduated marks on the neck of the container.

The sulfuric acid was dangerous to handle, Risser remembered. He told about the time when he accidentally spilled a jug of it on himself.

By taking quick action, Risser was able to wash the corrosive agent off his skin in time, "but the clothes were gone," he said.

Risser calculated individual and total butterfat production for each cow from the butterfat percentage and milk production figures. He also performed a feed-cost analysis.

"It was an all-day job," Risser said. "When you left the farm, the herd records were complete."

The job changed in the early 1970s when the Pennsylvania DHIA began sending its milk samples to Penn State. At that point, the university lab took over the butterfat testing. It soon began to offer new services, too, including protein and somatic cell counts (SCC) tests.

At that time, a farm wife asked Risser what he was going to do with all his time, since he no longer had to perform butterfat tests.

"I'm going to shave every day," Risser quipped.

The addition of more herds to his circuit over the years, however, kept Risser's schedule full. He continued to wake at 3 a.m. each morning in order to "have a leisurely breakfast" before driving to the dairy farm scheduled for the day. Normally, he logged a six-and-a-half day work week.

Higher production in recent decades served to shuffle the schedule. When some producers began milking three times a day, Risser sometimes found himself in the barn at odder hours than before. Having worked a few decades on a more or less consistent morning and evening milking schedule, the adjustment was a new challenge for him.

"The midnight shift got to me," he said.

Another significant change Risser has seen in the DHIA program is that many herds today are tested at only one milking per month, alternating between a.m. and p.m. from month to month.

In earlier years, testers kept to a strict twice-per-month schedule.

A particularly trying time came in the early 1990s when a group from Lancaster County elected to withdraw from the Pennsylvania DHIA and form a new association. Risser was the only tester in the county to remain with Pennsylvania DHIA. A number of farmers chose not to go along with the break, however, and Risser's circuit "was kept full to the end," he said.

Even with all its hardships, hazards, and inconveniences, Risser ultimately found his profession rewarding.

"What I got the greatest satisfaction out of was to see a young fellow I could give a few pointers to and see him go with it," Risser said.

He also enjoyed the bit of flexibility his schedule offered.

"You had a given circuit to do within a month. If you worked ahead, you could take a few days off," he said.

Risser has lived with diabetes for the past 15 years, a condition he said he was able to manage well while continuing to work a normal schedule.

The rhythm of the tester's job — working several hours a time during milking shifts, then being able to take a break — was "made to order" for a diabetic, he said.

Now he will be allowed to exercise even more flexibility in his daily life. One of the things he'll devote more time to is his love of vegetable and flower gardening.

Risser lives with his wife, Lois Anne, on the property where he grew up just outside of Lancaster. He and Lois Anne have three grown children — Carol Ann, Ron, and Mary Ellen — and four grandchildren.

Risser summed up his career as a milk tester in a way that makes it clear why he stayed with it for five decades.

"It's been a joy to me, helping farmers with their operation," he said.

USDA Announces First Meeting Of Biotechnology Advisory Committee

WASHINGTON, D.C. — The USDA's Advisory Committee on Biotechnology and 21st Century Agriculture (AC21) will conduct its first meeting June 16-17 in Washington, D.C.

The meeting will take place in the Vista C Room at the Wyndham Washington Hotel, 1400 M Street, N.W., from 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m., both days.

The AC21 consists of 18 members representing the biotechnology industry, the seed industry, international plant genetics research, farmers, food manufacturers, commodity processors and shippers, environmental and consumer groups, along with academic researchers, including a bioethicist.

The committee will develop an approach to examine the impacts of agricultural biotechnology on American agriculture over the next five to 10 years meeting this task. There also will be preliminary presentations and introductory discussions on two sub-areas of the committee's work: new biotechnology-derived nonfood uses of row crops and impacts of biotechnology throughout the entire food production and distribution system.

For more information, contact Dr. Michael Schechtman at (202) 720-3817 or via e-mail at mschechtman@ars.usda.gov at least three business days before the meeting.

Pa., N.J. Agriculture Secretaries Meet To Discuss Animal Health

HARRISBURG (Dauphin Co.) — Agriculture Secretary Dennis C. Wolff announced that he and New Jersey Agriculture Secretary Charles M. Kuperus will meet with the Animal Health and Diagnostic Commission (AHDC) to discuss animal health issues at their June meeting.

"As a result of a shared border and common agriculture industries, Pennsylvania and New Jersey have a strong history of cooperation in animal agriculture," Wolff said. "Our cooperation has included surveillance for diseases such as avian influenza in poultry and for pseudorabies in swine. I look forward to continued cooperation with New Jersey on agricultural issues."

Wolff added that Pennsylvania would certainly be looking with








interest at New Jersey's new Humane Standards Rule and its potential impact on the agriculture industry.

Created by the Pennsylvania General Assembly in 1988, the AHDC is a fifteen-member departmental administrative commission designed to function as a quality assurance mechanism in the animal industry. AHDC oversees a broad range of animal issues, such as animal health concerns, disease surveillance, field investigations, research projects, and emergency management. Through recommendations provided by the Field Investigation Committee, the AHDC identifies emerging issues that impact the food animal populations and other animal health problems.

ATTENTION DAIRY FARMERS

LANCO Dairy Farmers Co-Op Inc.
1373 Beaver Dam Road, Honey Brook, PA 19344

Lanco Wants You To Check Out Our Numbers

-  60 Cent Somatic Cell Premium. Broken in 5 segments down to 400,000.
-  55 Cent Over Order Premium
-  50 Cent Hauling - No Stop Charges On 4 Milking Pick-Up
-  Over 800 Members In PA & MD
-  7-Fieldmen To Cover All Your Needs
-  11-Local Haulers
-  No Equity Deductions, Marketing Fees, Market Administrator Test Fees or Membership Fees.

We are a farmer run and controlled grass roots co-op and milk marketing division of Allied Federated Co-op, Canton, New York. Call us today! We are truly farmers coming and working together.

315-858-0312 - 717-789-9685 - 717-993-6808

IDEAL LEAF TOBACCO

Plans to buy Type 609 tobacco in Pennsylvania of the 2003 crop.

Ideal Leaf Tobacco Co.
6414 Abilene Rd.
Farmville, Va 23901
434-390-7165

Packaging Solutions

for any season

- Plastic Containers
- Paper, Poly & Mesh Bags
- Wood Baskets
- Cider Jugs
- Labels
- Bin Liners
- Fruit & Vegetable Picking Containers
- Corrugated & Gift Packaging
- Custom Printing Available

1.800.457.3099

Putnam
Plastics

FAX: (937)866.9365
www.putnamfarm.com

