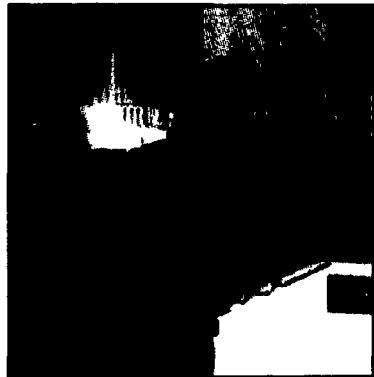


Hog Farming Summit

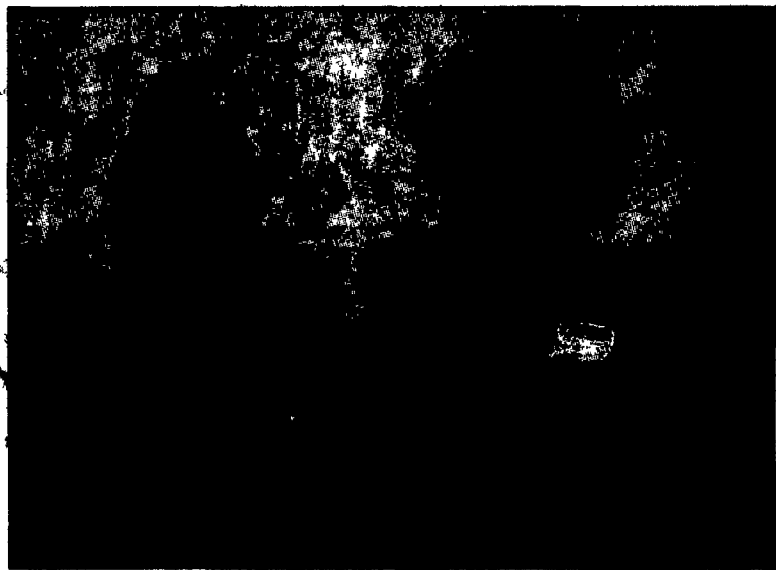
(Continued from Page A1)

that the hogs are well-cared for while providing families a livelihood on the farm.

The summit was sponsored by the Waterkeeper Alliance and featured Robert F. Kennedy, Jr., son of the late U.S. Attorney General and nephew of the late U.S. President John F. Kennedy, as keynote speaker. Other groups organizing the summit included the Pennsylvania Association for Sustainable Agriculture (PASA), PennFuture, White Dog Cafe Foundation, Global Resource Action Center for the Environment (GRACE), Animal Welfare Institute, and Delaware Riverkeeper



Robert F. Kennedy, Jr. of the Waterkeeper Alliance explains his goal of eliminating large-scale, corporate hog farms.



Barbara Determan, left, former president of the National Pork Producers Council, and Kara Flynn, public relations specialist, say the pork industry has room for both confinement and open-air hog producers.

Network.

Dozens spoke throughout the day on the various impacts of industrial hog operations and the legal issues surrounding them. A number of sessions also focused on the direct marketing of pasture-raised pork.

Paul Willis of Willis Free Range Pig Farm in Thornton, Iowa, spoke about his farm and marketing operation. Willis is manager of Niman Ranch Pork Company, which sells free-range pork through various outlets across the country.

Willis uses outdoor farrowing pens on pasture and remodeled dairy freestall barns as winter housing. The sows and pigs forage during the growing season and are allowed mobility and access to hay in the wintertime. Straw is used for indoor bedding.

Niman Ranch Pork Company slaughters and processes about 2,000 hogs per week from more than 280 farms that supply it. According to Willis, part of what makes the Niman Ranch enterprise successful is that the taste and eating quality of pastured pork is "dramatically different" from that of hogs raised in confinement. That translates into higher-priced pork chops in stores and restaurants.

"If we're raising the best pigs, we're going to ask the best price," Willis said. He added that some Niman Ranch cuts, such as shoulder, are not priced much



Paul Willis of Niman Ranch shares pork marketing hints.

above conventional choices.

Helen Browning of the Wiltshire Downs in the south of England shared her challenges and successes in starting the first organic pig operation in the United Kingdom (U.K.) She founded Eastbrook Farms Organic Meat in the late 1980s on her father's 1,300-acre farm, with the goal of developing a large-scale pastured-pork enterprise.

Browning raises pigs on red and white clover pastures and markets organic pork across the U.K. For sows, she prefers a cross between the Duroc and British Saddleback breeds for good mothering ability as well as meat production.

Pigs are used as part of "a whole farm system," she said. Clover fields reduced to dirt by aggressively foraging pigs are then rotated into crops, including corn, potatoes, and wheat.

It has taken time for Browning to develop a steady wholesale customer base in the U.K. Her marketing plan is constantly updated in order to sell pork from the 600 hogs slaughtered for her markets per week, including some from other farms.

"We've had to work very hard to market our products," Browning said. "Over the years, I suppose we've had a go at most forms of direct marketing. It's been a hair-raising ride."

About five years ago, Browning's business "did a complete turnaround," she said, when she began offering branded products for supermarkets.

Beside selling to supermarkets and restaurants, Browning also offers overnight courier delivery of pork products to homes across the U.K.

Creating a consumer base is prerequisite to selling products raised in alternative farming systems, according to Browning.

"We can only change the way



Contract hog producers attending the summit included, from left, Nate Richard, Caressa Crone, and Craig Richard (father of Nate). The Crone and Richard families say their hog operations have been well-accepted in their communities.

we farm when we change the way the consumer shops," she said.

Among those speaking on the adverse effects of industrial hog operations was Dr. John Ikerd, a retired ag economist from the University of Missouri. He spends much of his time writing and speaking about ag sustainability issues.

Ikerd focused on the impact of corporate livestock operations on rural communities, calling them a form of "colonization" similar to the kind that displaced native cultures throughout history.

"These agribusiness corporations are basically colonizing rural America," Ikerd said. "We see communities that are losing control over the local economy, culture, and government."

Promises that contract livestock operations will bring economic prosperity to rural communities are hollow, according to Ikerd.

"The money flows out of the community," he said. "We see those areas still economically depressed."

Throughout the day, numerous references were made to the concentration of hogs on the coastal plain of North Carolina and the environmental impacts on waterways and quality of life in the region. A whirlwind of bad publicity for the North Carolina hog industry came to a head in 1999 when Hurricane Floyd flooded the area, causing manure pits to overflow into streams and rivers and dead hogs to float atop of the floodwaters.

A key point made by critics of the North Carolina hog industry is that manure there is not viewed as fertilizer, but as a waste product that is spread simply in order to get rid of it. That, they say, has resulted in illegal spreading practices that wreak havoc on the environment.



Helen Browning of England talks about her challenges and successes marketing organic, pasture-raised pork in the United Kingdom.

According to keynote speaker Kennedy, "In Pennsylvania, that hasn't happened yet, but it's going to."

As president of the New York City-based Waterkeeper's Alliance, Kennedy has been at work bringing lawsuits against corporations that pollute.

Doug Goodlander, director of the State Conservation Commission Nutrient Management Program, said that Pennsylvania's Nutrient Management Act is designed to prevent problems like those in North Carolina.


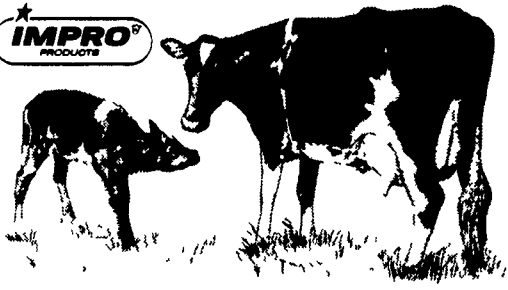
"North Carolina had a poor regulatory system," Goodlander said. "I think we do a good job watching over our water quality here."

Goodlander noted that local conservation districts throughout Pennsylvania are "the eyes and ears" of the nutrient management system.

Jim Brubaker, Lewisburg, responded to some of the ideas put forth by conference speakers. Brubaker, along with his daughter and son-in-law, finishes hogs through contracts with Hostetter Management and Hatfield in three barns with a total capacity for 6,300 head.

"I'm not sure they really have correct information about what is hap-

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