

Farm Show Leaders Planning For '04

DAVE LEFEVER

Lancaster Farming Staff

HARRISBURG (Dauphin Co.) — The Pennsylvania Farm Show has a solid foundation to build on and it needs to keep getting better, according to members of the Commercial Ag Exhibit Committee.

The committee met with about 50 exhibitors and the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture's Farm Show management team for a dinner at the Farm Show Complex Wednesday evening.

The committee reviewed successes and shortfalls of the 2003 show and introduced plans for the future.

Possible changes for the 2004 Farm Show include:

- extending the number of farmer days from three to four;
- having dairy show animals brought in earlier in the week;
- adding a 20,000 square foot auxiliary structure to provide more commercial exhibition space; and
- drawing a more diverse group of commercial ag exhibitors, including dairy product suppliers.

Some ag equipment exhibitors expressed concern about having staff on hand for an additional farmer day. Others noted that farmers and potential customers were present throughout the entire eight days at the show this past January.

Last year's farmer days, which included free parking and refreshments for farmers as well as fully-manned commercial exhibits, were set for Monday through Wednesday. For 2004, the committee is proposing adding Thursday as an additional farmer day.

Based on the discussion Wednesday evening, the committee will be reviewing that proposal, according to Tom Yohe, general manager of ag exhibits.

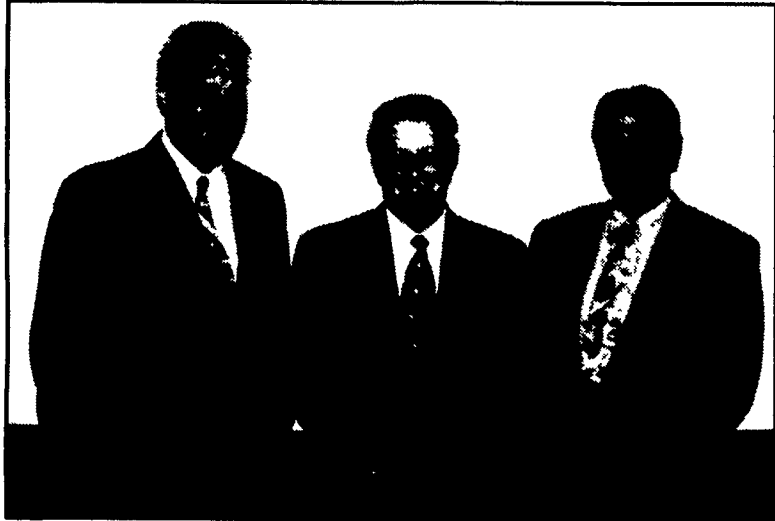
The first-ever live machinery demonstrations in 2003 were a success, but product seminars were poorly attended, Yohe noted. The committee will consider adding more demonstrations. It will also determine whether or not to continue the seminars and, if so, how to better promote them.

According to committee member Don Hoover, the Farm Show is an excellent venue for entire farm families as well as an opportunity to communicate with people from non-farm backgrounds.

"We need to help them understand (agriculture) and here is a golden opportunity to do that,"



Exhibitor Gerald Kurtz, left, brainstorms 2004 Farm Show plans with Ed Nielsen.



The new PDA Farm Show team, from left, Ed Nielsen, director; Bill Wehry, deputy secretary; and Larry Weaver, chief of show management.

Hoover said.

Ed Nielsen, new Farm Show director, suggested that commercial exhibitors "profile" potential customers who come to the show to help determine buying patterns and improve exhibitors' return on their investment of time and money in the show.

Nielsen spoke about his goal of increasing international presence at the Farm Show, which has traditionally been a place where local equipment dealers meet local customers.

The challenge of balancing local flavor with a global marketing plan: "How big do you get without losing your soul?" Nielsen said.

The new Farm Show management team includes Bill Wehry, a Schuylkill County farmer, deputy secretary; and Larry Weaver, a

Lancaster County cattleman, as chief of show management.

Also on hand were Pennsylvania Secretary of Agriculture Dennis Wolff, and Deputy Secretary Russ Redding, moderator of the meeting.

Redding said logistical glitches in last year's show, such as overcrowding in the main corridor, will be resolved at the 2004 show.

To make comments and suggestions, call the Farm Show Office at (717) 787-5373.



By Marc Tosiano
Pa. State Statistician

Editor's note: This is a monthly column from the Pennsylvania Ag Statistics Service (PASS), a field office of USDA's National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) in cooperation with the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture (PDA). The Website is www.usda.gov/nass/.

DAIRY HERD BUYOUT

The Cooperatives Working Together, or CWT program to reduce dairy herd numbers, has generated much discussion and it has received a lot of press lately.

You may not realize that statistics from USDA's National Ag Statistics Service were and continue to be a major source of information for the cooperatives that have been planning this buyout. Our monthly state-level statistics of cow numbers, milk per cow, and production no doubt will take a role in the implementation of the plan if it is approved.

Most folks see or hear about our statistics and never realize that NASS and the Pennsylvania Ag Statistics Service is the source of the numbers. These days, everyone uses statistics to make their point or promote their cause. Our cause is agriculture. Our data is public information so we don't have to be credited as the source. Often our data is only credited to "USDA" and the agency name is never mentioned.

You have probably seen or heard NASS numbers in articles in agricultural magazines and newspapers, talks or reports from extension specialists and other educators, grower association or cooperative meetings and conferences, publications and handouts from the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture (PDA) or Penn State, pamphlets from chambers of commerce promot-

ing agriculture, or speeches from various leaders of Pennsylvania agriculture.

By helping us with our surveys, you are helping yourselves to have accurate information that is used in these ways and many more.

Ag Census Continues On The Phone

Response to the Ag Census by Pennsylvania growers is only about average compared to other states. This means that half of the states have a better response than here in the Keystone State.

You may still get a phone call if we haven't received your form for the 2002 Census of Agriculture. We are making phone calls in an attempt to improve response here in Pennsylvania.

After so many growers have already responded, it would be a shame to come up short in the final tally! We want Pennsylvania agriculture to be properly represented compared to the other states. Every response is important because the numbers that come from the Ag Census will be used for the next five years as part of the decisions that affect agriculture and you.

If you have questions about the census or need a census form, call 1-888-4AG-STAT or 1-888-424-7828.

U.S. Cattle Counted

Cattle inventories, births, and deaths are measured twice a year, in January and July. In July, about 9,400 of the largest cattle operations (including dairies) are contacted nationwide to help establish official statistics at the national level.

In Pennsylvania, only 125 of the largest cattle and dairy operations are asked for their help with

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Milk Production Finally Declines

Ken Bailey
Dairy Economist
Penn State

USDA just released its May milk production report and the numbers look good. Milk production for 20 select states was down 0.4 percent from the same month a year ago. Cow numbers on dairy farms have fallen two months in a row.

California, the nation's number one dairy state, actually had no growth in cow numbers from April to May 2003. And, only five of the top 20 dairy producing states had positive growth rates for May relative to a year ago.

This news will be viewed as favorable by the dairy industry. It indicates that the marketplace is finally realigning supply with demand.

The market may have already factored in some of the expectation for lower milk output. The Class III price is expected to peak at \$12.50 per cwt by the fall. However, it is possible that dairy futures at the Chicago Mercantile Exchange could get higher, particularly if the market expects the USDA's milk production report to indicate a sustained trends towards less milk.

It is not known precisely why the nations milk output declined. One likely reason is that cow numbers have finally responded to months of low milk prices. The other reason may be related to a cold and damp spring (less milk per cow). This is particularly true for states like Pennsylvania, New York and Vermont.

Longtime Penn State Dairy Instructor Retires



UNIVERSITY PARK (Centre Co.) — Larry Muller, renowned Penn State dairy science instructor, center, was feted during a two-day retirement symposium at the Penn Stater Hotel Tuesday and Wednesday this week. Noted grazing specialist Eric Kolver, Dexcel Co., calls Muller, who began teaching at Penn State in 1976, a "champion of pasture-based dairying in the U.S. — the voice of reason to balance the views of the proponents and critics of grass-based dairying." Speakers at the symposium included, from left, Jim Aldrich, Carl Akey Co.; Elliot Block, Church and Dwight Co. Inc.; Muller; Lisa Holden, associate professor of dairy science; and Terry Etherton, department head, dairy and animal science. More about Muller's life and work is scheduled in *Lancaster Farming's Dairy Plus* June 28. Photo by Andy Andrews, editor