

Grass, And Nothing But, For Plum Bottom Ayrshires

ANDY ANDREWS
Editor

BELLEVILLE (Mifflin Co.) — Scottish ancestry is critical to the success of one major sale that emphasizes dairy animals that benefit a lot from grazing.

John Rodgers' Sixth Annual "Raised To Graze" Sale emphasizes the grazing aspects of Ayrshire animals.

"My blood relatives are from Scotland," noted Rodgers to about 40 visitors to his farm in late April this year.

The visitors — mostly ag lending officers — came along to see what makes a grazing operation successful. While with the grazer, the lenders (part of the 37th annual Pennsylvania Agricultural Credit Conference in University Park) learned about the sale, conducted each August at Rodgers' Plum Bottom Farm.

About 60 head of cattle go on sale on Saturday, Aug. 16 at 12:59 p.m., noted Rodgers. Ayrshire breeders come from Pennsylvania, Maryland, Minnesota, Canada, Iowa — all to see animals grown with grass as the number one, and in Rodgers' case, only feed.

Intensive rotational grazing uses very little equipment. Cost savings make it so successful. In fact, the only equipment Rodgers



John Rodgers, Plum Bottom Farm, right, speaks with Lou Moore, professor of ag economics, Penn State, during the ag lender tour in late April.
Photo by Andy Andrews, editor

claims includes a 47-horsepower tractor, a mower, and a manure spreader.

Rodgers has 17 paddocks on 100 acres, all in grazing. The farm feeds about 1 acre per animal per year. Much of the grass is a mixture, including tall fescue, orchardgrass, bluegrass, and white clover.

"I let the cattle harvest them," he said. "I want you to notice the beautiful green grass and red and white clover."

Some fresh and some springing cows are fed nothing but grass. And Rodgers maintains grass-fed Ayrshire beef. Rodgers also rents out some acres and harvests timber on several acres.

He said that selective cuts were harvested on 85 timber acres, and in another 15 years will be cut again.

The sale is the week before Ag Progress Days at Penn State. For those interested, call Rodgers at (717) 935-5242.

National Pork Board Announces Staff Size Reduction

DES MOINES, Iowa — The National Pork Board announced today that it is eliminating 18 staff positions in response to a prolonged slump in hog prices that has reduced revenues from the Pork Checkoff. The layoffs, from a staff of 96, are effective July 15.

"Many hog producers have been losing money over the past 18 months, which has turned out to be one of the most severe dips in the price cycle ever," said Steven D. Murphy, chief executive officer of the National Pork Board.

"Producers have had to take a critical look at their own operations and they expect the same of their Checkoff organization."

Hog producers contribute 40 cents per \$100 in sales to the Pork Checkoff each time they market an animal. The National Pork Board uses those funds to help build demand through programs such as the Pork. The Other White Meat advertising campaign; to conduct production and consumer research, and to help consumers incorporate pork into their diets.

The reduction in market prices

paid to hog farmers, coupled with a 5-cent reduction in the Pork Checkoff rate approved in 2002, has resulted in a 17.5 percent reduction in the National Pork Board's budget in just two years.

The National Pork Board budget in 2002 was approximately \$57 million. The projected 2004 budget is approximately \$47 million.

Murphy noted that technology advances, including new Internet tools, are helping the National

Pork Board maintain producer programs with fewer full-time staff. "Our commitment to managing programs with producers' Checkoff investments is, if anything, firmer than ever," he said.

"If it weren't, we would not be making these changes. We will strive to work smarter and to continue to seek new ways of doing business that are more efficient, freeing resources for the programs that yield the greatest results for producers."

Grazing, On-Farm Composting Meeting Scheduled In Columbia County

BLOOMSBURG (Columbia Co.) — Penn State Cooperative Extension in the Central Susquehanna Valley has scheduled an on-farm educational meeting for Tuesday, July 15 at the Dan Davis farm in Columbia County. The meeting will begin at 7 p.m.

The farm is a beef cow/calf and commercial hay operation. Davis recently completed pasture improvement practices. Composting has been implemented to utilize manure and poor quality hay bales.

Discussion at the meeting will center on pasture improvement practices, intensive grazing management, and composting systems.

The farm is along Route 339 in southeastern Columbia County. The farm is on the Columbia/Schuylkill County line and is ten miles southeast of Mainville.

Call Dave Hartman at (570) 784-6660 or dwh2@psu.edu for more information.

Raw Milk Sales Still Permitted In Pa.

Ag Committee Chairman Dispels Rumors

HARRISBURG (Dauphin Co.) — Rep. Art Hershey (R-13), chairman of the House Agriculture and Rural Affairs Committee, issued the following statement in an effort to reassure licensed raw milk sellers that their business is not in jeopardy, and that consumers will continue to be able to purchase raw milk.

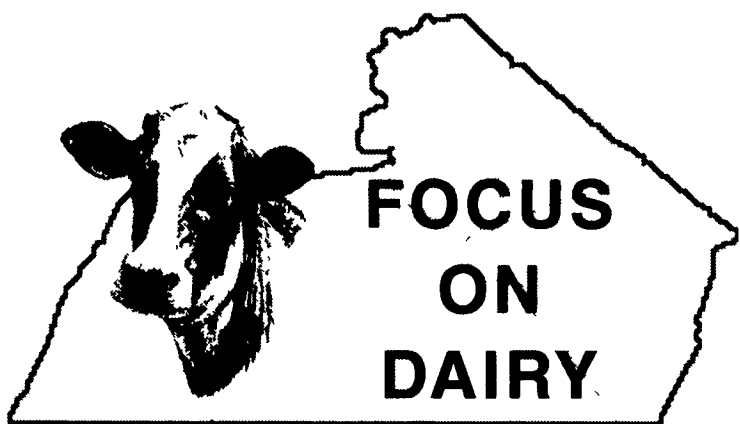
"Recent rumors that the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture and the General Assembly

are attempting to change the law and regulations with regard to the sale of raw milk are not true," Hershey said.

"Licensed raw milk dealers are permitted to sell milk from their farm, although the law continues to prohibit the sale of raw milk butter, cottage cheese, yogurt, ice cream or other dairy products in the commonwealth due to licensing requirements. I believe that this present policy adequately

balances legitimate sanitation, inspection and food safety concerns with certain individual consumer's preference for raw milk.

"As a farmer, and as an individual who understands that some consumers prefer to exercise this choice, I understand the concern over recent rumors and would like to reassure all parties that there is no legislative or regulatory change pending that would affect the sale or purchase of raw milk in Pennsylvania."



Penn State Cooperative Extension Capitol Region Dairy Team

STRESS ON THE FARM

Philip E. Wagner
Extension Agent — Dairy
Franklin County

Dairy farmers are a hardy group. They work long hours and endure changeable weather and difficult market conditions. This has been particularly evident the past year. Most farmers and their families readily admit the existence of problems connected with farming but few will admit that these problems create stress.

Farm stress is inevitable, given the condition of farming today. What is not inevitable is the damage stress can do to the health and the emotions of farmers and their families.

For most farmers, stress is not severe enough to cause serious health problems. But for a few, and that number is growing, stress is life threatening. Some farmers display symptoms such as habitual smoking, heavy drinking, irritability, insomnia, fatigue, and restlessness. Stress interferes with their ability to make good judgments, slows their reaction time, and causes them to cut corners. Stress generally makes life miserable and uncomfortable for those around farmers.

Stress is that uncomfortable condition a person experiences when the body creates excess energy to protect itself. This condition is caused by hormones being released into the body and by increased blood pressure, heart and breathing rates, and changes in blood flow. Not all stress is bad. If it weren't for stress none of us could operate. Stress is harmful when it's not controlled or managed.

Stress is like a guitar string. If the string is too tight, it snaps; if it is too slack, it won't work — it won't make music. Farmers need some stress to be alert and productive. If the body adjusts to the stress event, then everything is OK. If the stress results from an unwanted and threatening event, is prolonged, builds up, or too much occurs at one time, the body's defenses weaken and health may be affected.

An Associated Press bulletin states that farmers are second to laborers in the number of deaths from heart and artery diseases, ulcers, and nervous disorders — all connected to unmanaged stress. The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health ranks farming in the top 10 percent of the 130 most stressful occupations. Farming is one of the 10 most stressful occupations!

These are numerous indicators of stress: accidents, frequent



Philip E. Wagner

headaches, backaches, other physical symptoms, fatigue, sleep disturbances, recurrent depression, weight gain or loss, negative outlook, increased irritability, impatience, and strained relationships. If you're under too much stress, you can find yourself blaming others for situations, or feel a sense of loneliness, a sense of alienation from others, increased doubts about your competence, low self-esteem, frequent frustration with tasks, and difficulty meeting deadlines and appointments. Strangely, you might also experience an overwhelming urgency of time, an inability to live in the present, a general absence of joy or pleasure in your life, and general unhappiness.

You can do several things that will help you stay alert and handle the stress that builds up. They include getting enough sleep, loafing a little, and working off stress with physical activity. Try to accept what you cannot change, balance work with play, talk out your troubles, and avoid self-medication. Take time to get away from it all. Don't always blame others. Don't let things slide. Take one thing at a time.

Stress is an important and necessary part of life. How we handle it is the question. If we don't deal with it or we deny it is a part of our life, then we may feel the ill-effects of it.

No one can honestly say he or she is immune from stress. Stress can pile up and cause harm. One common result of stress "pileup" is the increased accident rate on the farm. Only you can do something about stress.

Reference material for this article was provided by James E. Van Horn, family sociology extension specialist, Penn State.

