

State Officials Offer New Tool To Help Homeowners, Farmers Eliminate Mosquito Breeding Areas

HARRISBURG (Dauphin Co.) — Urging Pennsylvanians to take personal protection measures to help lower the incidence of West Nile virus, officials from the departments of health, environmental protection, and agriculture encouraged the use of a new treatment material to help eliminate mosquito breeding areas on homeowner properties.

"I urge everyone to eliminate standing water wherever possible on their properties. Small, shallow stagnant pools of water are among the best mosquito breeding habitats. Getting rid of water in flower pots, birdbaths, buckets, swimming pool covers and old tires around your home can significantly reduce your chance of being bitten," said Environmental Protection Secretary Kathleen McGinty, who noted that mosquitoes will start to breed in standing water after four or five days.

The officials advised homeowners that Bti, the naturally occurring bacteria that state and counties have used for several years to kill mosquito larvae, is

becoming widely available for public use. Bti is available for use in small areas, such as birdbaths, and in larger areas, such as ornamental pools or small ponds.

At the home of Jack and Joan Peck just outside of Harrisburg in Dauphin County, officials demonstrated how to apply the material, which is sold under several brand names at various stores selling outdoor supplies. Bti is a naturally occurring bacteria that attacks the digestive system of mosquito and black fly larvae, killing them in a matter of hours. Bti is not harmful to people, pets, other aquatic animals, or plants, and dissolves after a few hours if not consumed by insect larvae.

"Already this year, we have eight confirmed human cases of the virus in Pennsylvania," said Health's Director of Epidemiology Joel Hersh. "There has been one death reported in the southern United States. This should serve as a reminder that all of us need to do what we can to lessen our chances of being infected through a mosquito bite. Containing West Nile virus is some-

thing we have to work together to do."

Hersh also recommends wearing insect repellent with DEET, wearing long sleeves and long pants when possible, and avoiding mosquito-infested areas at dawn and dusk, which are the times of day mosquitoes are most likely to bite people.

"Farmers and horse owners also play a key role in controlling West Nile virus. I would ask farmers and horse owners to eliminate standing water where they can on their properties," said Nan Hanshaw-Roberts, a veterinarian at the Department of Agriculture. "They should also consult with their veterinarians about the vaccine that is available for horses."

State officials recommended a number of tips to help eliminate mosquito-breeding areas around the home and farm, including:

- Disposing of tin cans, plastic containers, ceramic pots or similar water-holding containers that have collected on your property.
- Paying attention to dis-

carded tires. Stagnant water in tires are where most mosquitoes breed.

- Drilling holes in the bottom of recycling containers left outdoors.

- Having clogged roof gutters cleaned every year, particularly if the leaves from surrounding trees have a tendency to plug up the drains. Roof gutters can produce millions of mosquitoes each season.

- Turning over plastic wading pools when not in use. Stagnant water in a wading pool becomes a place for mosquitoes to breed.

- Turning over wheelbarrows and not letting water stagnate in birdbaths. Both provide breeding habitats for domestic mosquitoes.

- Aerating ornamental pools or stocking them with fish. Water gardens can become major

mosquito producers if they are allowed to stagnate. Clean and chlorinate swimming pools not in use. A swimming pool left unattended by a family on vacation for a month can produce enough mosquitoes to result in neighborhood-wide complaints. Mosquitoes may even breed in the water that collects on pool covers.

- Keeping water in buckets and troughs fresh and clean.
- Using landscaping to eliminate standing water that collects on your property. Mosquitoes may breed in any puddle that lasts for more than four days.

Report Gives Dairy Producer Management Benchmarks

CAMP HILL (Cumberland Co.) — Dairy producers can measure their management and compare their outcomes with other farmers from the newly released "2003 Dairy Herd Analysis," produced by a collaborative effort of Pennsylvania Farm Bureau's MSC Business Services Division, AgChoice Farm Credit, and Mid-Atlantic Farm Credit and 1st Pioneer Farm Credit.

The analysis presents an overall picture of the state and regional dairy landscape based on data collected from dairy farms across the northeastern U.S.

"We had been compiling a state report for the past 30 years," said Mike Evanish, manager of PFB's MSC Business Services. "However, as a result of our alliance with AgChoice and MidAtlantic Farm Credit, we are able to produce a summary that compares our Pennsylvania data with data from all over the Northeast, providing better insight for the agriculture community. The result is a very informative management tool, presented in what we believe is an interesting format designed to help farmers improve their bottom line. The Dairy Herd analysis is a completely new way of presenting data. It looks at a farm from a corporate perspective, where the operator is paid first."

The heart of the report is the benchmark figures that are separated by herd size. The analysis also enables comparison with the top 10 percent of Pennsylvania's dairy producers and dairy farmers from the Northeast.

The analysis features articles by three producers:

- John Hess, owner of Jo-Bo Holsteins in Gettysburg. The farm has been contracting to improve the milk price since 1999. Hess discusses his belief that dairy farmers need to take individual responsibility for managing milk price volatility. "One way to survive in volatile marketing conditions is to manage risk by hedging, using forward contracts or futures contracts. These techniques simply shift the risk of price changes in the cash market to the buyer (or the futures mar-

kets), as many grain farmers have done over the years," said Hess.

The analysis includes charts showing the milk price differential between no contracts and using contracts. In 2002 the average price without a contract was \$13.38 per hundredweight versus \$15 per hundredweight with contracts.

- Dale Hoffman, owner of Kar-Dale Acres in Shinglehouse. Hoffman was a founding member of the Potter County Milk Producers Association (PCMP) in January 2001. "Thrive, not survive. That's the motto we decided to use when we were forming the group to share ideas, discuss problems, and find solution to help us thrive in the dairy industry," said Hoffman.

- Marlin Hoff, owner of Cold-springs Farms in New Windsor, Md. Coldsprings Farms average more than 24,000 pounds of milk, 900 pounds of fat, and 770 pounds of protein, with a herd that is 94 percent homebred. "When I started milking in 1963, a hundredweight of milk could buy you almost four hours of labor. Today, you can buy about 40 minutes with those same hundred pounds," said Hoff. "That paints a tough picture for farmers starting today. But, the good news is that dairy cows are more productive and more efficient than ever before and these superior genetics can help cash flow during the tough times." He believes that proper genetic decisions equals profits.

Lou Moore, a professor of ag economics at the Penn State University, also authors an article on the future of the dairy industry.

The free report can be viewed by linking to www.pfb.com, obtained by calling (717) 731-3517, or by stopping by the Farm Bureau Building at Ag Progress Days in Rockspring, which is located at Main and 5th Streets.

MSC Business Services, a comprehensive accounting firm, provides the report to all subscribers of its Farm Management Service program.

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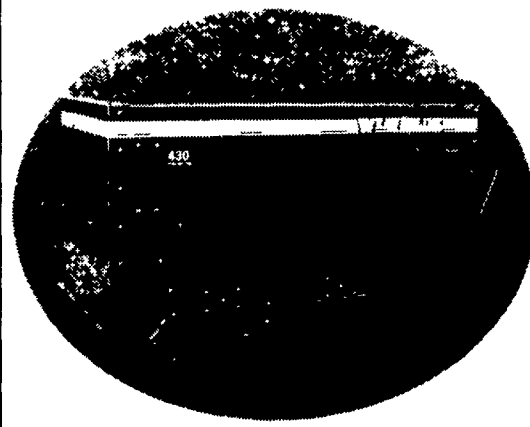
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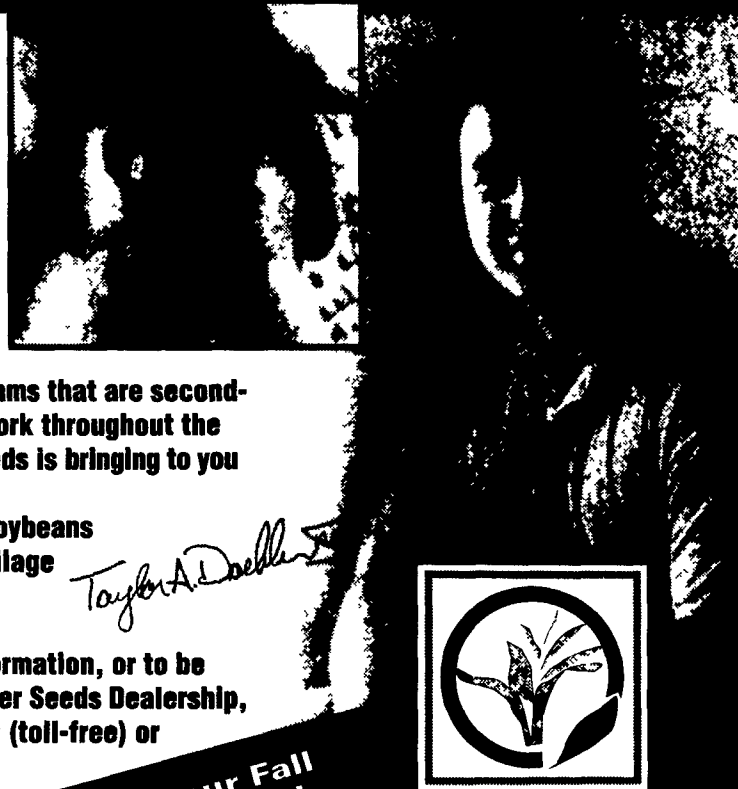

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