

Regional

Show Features High-Tech Farming

HARRISBURG (AP) — Farmers of the future are using the Internet to track weather systems and follow market trends before planting, plowing or selling their wares.

They use computers to balance their books and keep track of maintenance work and fertilization records, while satellite technology allows them to produce detailed maps of their fields to determine soil composition, fertilization needs and crop yields.

It's all part of "precision farming," and exhibitors across the Farm Show complex in Harrisburg are hoping to entice farmers to invest in the technological advances that are sweeping the farming industry.

The Pennsylvania Farm Show, now in its 82nd year, also features farm animals, equipment, food, agricultural demon-

strations and hundreds of commercial exhibitors. It showcases the state's \$4.1 billion agricultural industry.

The state's "precision farming" system is a "global positioning system" to determine exactly where to place seeds and fertilizers can cost \$250,000. A row-crop fertilizing machine outfitted with the same satellite technology sells for \$70,000.

"A farmer can optimize his profit potential by placing his assets where they ought to be," Larry Herr of Hooper Inc., which manufactures the combine.

Farmers said they know the value of the high-priced and high-tech equipment.

"The issue," said Norm Miller, farm manager at the Milton Hershey School in Hershey, "is whether or not the average

farmer can afford" to use such technology because it saves money in the long run.

Miller has used the Farm Works software for a little less than a year to better manage the 500 acres of farmland at the Hershey school. Miller uses the Windows-based program to calculate acreage and field histories, and to note tillage practices, fertilizer rates and herbicide usage. He also uses it to keep records and track crop yields.

"This allows me to take a look at the entire field and make recommendations within a four-foot area," Miller said, referring to the accuracy of the locating system.

Use of this technology "is economically beneficial for the farmer and environmentally sound because farmers are placing his crop inputs exactly where they need to be in the

amounts that they need to be in," said Brooks Clayville, a farmer and consultant with Eastern Precision Services in Maryland.

Equipment startup costs vary but usually run between \$8,000 and \$15,000, said Clayville. He insists the technology usually pays for itself, saving farmers time and money.

Connie Hoffer, who runs a grain and dairy farm with her husband in Annville, said they intend to invest in software in the near future so they can track their crop yields. "Just so we can get the right crop rotation to control weeds" and other problems, she said.

For now the family uses a computer program to "figure out how much money we're getting back per acre for the crop that we're growing," Mrs. Hoffer said.

They also use the Internet to keep track of the weather and the commodity futures market.

Because of computers, "What used to take me a better part of a day now takes me less than half-an-hour," she said. "It's made my life much more easier."

Joe and Brandon Marslett, 16 and 15 respectively, help their parents manage their 2-year-old automated dairy farm, Fawn Ridge Farms, in York, Pa.

Each cow among the 185 head of cattle on the 210-acre dairy farm is electronically monitored to determine peak milk production.

Cows wear ankle bracelets that help a computer track how much milk each cow produces and how much feed the cows consume. A heifer that does not eat in proper proportion to how much milk it produces may be ill.

Dairy Farmers Get Good News

TRENTON, N.J. (AP) — The Assembly on Monday gave some sweet news to dairy farmers who say they are trying to keep their business from going sour.

The lower house passed a bill that would allow dairy farmers to join a compact with other northeastern states and get paid more for their milk. The bill passed, 41-28, after a personal plea from Assembly Speaker Jack Collins, himself a part-time farmer. The bill now advances to Gov. Christie Whitman.

Dairy farmers said the bill was needed to keep them in business. Opponents of the bill, however, say consumers would pay up to 20 cents a gallon more for milk.

If allowed to join the compact, New Jersey dairy farmers would be guaranteed a price that is higher than the federal government's minimum for milk. The bill anticipates that New York and Pennsylvania would join the compact, currently comprised of the six New England states. New Jersey would not join un-

less New York joins.

Sponsors of the bill say New Jersey dairy farming industry is threatened with extinction.

"We owe it to our farmers," said Assemblyman Guy Gregg, R-Morris, the sponsor. "This is not a subsidy. This is fair pay for fair work."

State Agriculture Secretary Arthur Brown says there are 204 dairy farms in New Jersey. He said 45 percent of the state's dairy farms have gone out of business in the last decade. Brown's next month ordered an emergency six-month increase in how much farmers are paid for milk.

"I can remember the farmers getting together and asking for anything since I've been in the Legislature," said Assemblyman Joseph Malone, R-Burlington. "They don't want to have to sell their property to developers."

on with the project if she thought there were dangerous contaminants at the site. She said that if the board agrees to do any additional tests, she would advise the district pay for them.

The vote was unanimous to table Mrs. Licht's motion and further discuss the issue.

Mrs. Licht also questioned the building permit issued by the city for the middle school.

Original questions about the permit were raised by Henry Berger, attorney for United Citizens. United Citizens is a non-profit group fighting construction of the school.

Berger, in a letter to Titusville Zoning Hearing Board, said the city ordinance does not permit schools within a commercial zone. He said a hearing for a variance to allow the construction should have been conducted.

Superintendent Kenneth Winger said city Solicitor Robert Felton believed a variance was not needed. He added that the school district followed all requirements in obtaining its building permit.

District Solicitor Kemp Scales

said schools are specifically listed in sections of the ordinance dealing with residential zones but are listed as "public buildings" in sections dealing with commercial zones. Scales said a school is a permitted use.

School district land owner and United Citizens officer Rod Bedow said he does not believe because the public does not have free access to them.

The board voted three to four against halting construction. Eleven school district residents addressed the board during the three-hour meeting last night in Titusville High School's cafeteria. Most were concerned with issues tied to the middle school and renovation of the junior-senior high building.

Bedow was one of those speaking to the board. He promised that if the new building is completed, he would do "everything legally in my power to close and sell the middle school."

Donna Appel voiced strong concerns over a letter from project architect Dick Fox to board president Jim Nyström about school capacity figures. She quoted Fox as writing:



TOP SELLERS — Carrie Forbes, center, won \$25 for being the top seller in the recent Y-Teen holiday greens-sale. Ashley Dingle, left, got \$15 for second-place and Lindsey Walsh received \$10 for third highest. Funds raised during the sale benefited the YWCA.

- board -

"It should be noted that reimbursement used to be directed related to the areas of the building (instead of enrollment) and often the capacities were intentionally over-stated."

And: "Basically, the difference between the 1980 capacity of 1,663 students (which may have been more of a reimbursement-driven number than an actual program capacity anyway) and the current plan's capacity of 1,115 is the difference in educational programs between 1980 and 2000."

He is saying previous management fudged figures?" Ms. Appel asked. "Does anyone have an answer?"

Nyström said he will get the necessary information and respond to Ms. Appel in writing. She asked that the answer be provided to *The Herald*, and Nyström said she would be free to make his response public.

Keith Klingler also voiced concern about the Fox letter and its meaning. He said he would be interested in hearing what former superintendent of schools Howard Newson's comment would be.

Phil Hinkle also asked School Director Chip Osborn whether it is true his children are home schooled and do not attend Ti-

tusville schools. Osborn said that rumor is untrue.

Humanic noted the absence of newly appointed school director, James Wagner, from Monday's meeting.

Winger said Wagner was absent because of a personal commitment, to which Humanic responded, "That's really sad." He said there were nine other people who sought the board appointment "and would gladly have been here."

Center survey sent home with students for their families to fill out. Winger said it was to help determine what services are needed in the community. Humanic, however, said she believes the questions are too personal and asked that such a survey not be sent home with students in the future. Mrs. Licht responded that the surveys were anonymous.

Phil Hinkle spoke out for the school's support staff employees who are working without a contract and are in negotiations. Hinkle brought with him lists of

the salaries of other school district employees to compare with what the maintenance workers and secretaries are making.

Bernie Bieno submitted to Winger a list of 20 questions for answers. Bieno also discussed concerns which Crawford County Planning Commission has school sites, including the former gasoline storage tanks, the junk yard and the current railroad crossing.

Three Killed In I-95 Crash After Chase

PHILADELPHIA (AP) — At least three people were killed in a head-on car crash following a police chase on Interstate 95 Monday night, police said.

Thousands of motorists were still backed up at 11 p.m. after a pickup truck crossed from the freeway's northbound lanes into the southbound lanes in Philadelphia's Tacony section and struck a car head-on.

Two people in the truck were killed and another was critically injured and taken to Frankford Hospital-Torresdale. One person in the car was killed.

Two Brothers Charged With Burglary at Bar

Two men have been arrested for allegedly burglarizing a Forrester County bar, said state police, Tionesta.

Brothers Raymond D. Emrick, 29, of Tionesta, and Jeffrey R. Emrick, 37, of Ambridge, Pa., were charged with taking about \$1,000 cash and other items during the Jan. 4 burglary.

Police said they also are questioning a juvenile in connection with the burglary at Cougar Bobs in Kelleetville.

Raymond Emrick was arrested while at the barracks on Friday on an unrelated matter. Jeffrey Emrick was arrested Sunday when he showed at his brother's home for an unknown reason, police said.

The duo may be charged with additional burglaries that stem from December 1996.

State Briefs

Pets Stolen From Store In New Castle

NEW CASTLE, Pa. (AP) — Police were looking Monday for two snakes, nine birds, a family of hedgehogs, an alligator and the robber who stole them from a Lawrence County pet store.

The animals were taken sometime over the weekend from the Animal Jungle in New Castle, police said.

Owner Michelle Phipps said the animals are not dangerous because they are accustomed to human handling, but she feared they could be harmed by an inexperienced caretaker.

"None of them will survive this weather," she said. The thief probably was somebody familiar with the store and its animals, Phipps believes.

"They didn't take money out of the cash register," she said. "They took only the animals they knew were tame."

Three baby hedgehogs, born just last week, and their mother were among the stolen animals. Phipps said the mother might reject her babies if they have been touched by a human.

Phipps said the animals, worth about \$2,100, were not insured.

Man Faces Prison Time For Scam

PITTSBURGH (AP) — A Colorado man faces up to five years in prison for his role in an \$18 million Medicare scam involving the marketing of surgical dressings and skin cleansers to nursing homes.

Hugh McElwain, 31, of Longmont, Colo., pleaded guilty to charges of conspiracy to commit Medicare fraud, U.S. Attorney Linda Kelly announced.

Last fall, Dr. Vladimir Sklarov and Omega Reimbursement Concepts Inc., formerly based in Pittsburgh, advised their roles in the scheme.

McElwain, whose sentencing date was not immediately set, was an Omega employee, Kelly said Friday.

Omega marketed its products to nursing home residents as if the items were covered by Medicare, but they were not covered. Omega created 93 fake companies to trick the government into thinking it was paying small, unrelated firms instead of one large one.

Medicare paid Omega nearly \$1 million for the skin cleansers, marketed under the brand name Orchid Freshly, said Kelly in a statement for the surgical dressings.

Councilman Proposes Tax Increase

PITTSBURGH (AP) — Suburbanites would either pay more to park in the city, or pay more to work there under a councilman's proposal.

Pittsburgh Councilman Dan Onorato wants to raise the occupational privilege tax to \$50 a year from \$10, a move he said would raise an additional \$12.5 million for the cash-strapped city.

The occupational privilege tax has been unchanged since 1965. But changing it would take an act of the state Legislature, and similar appeals have been ignored in Harrisburg for 30 years.

Firm Agrees To Fine For Violation

KING OF PRUSSIA, Pa. (AP) — Pennsylvania Power & Light Co. said it will not contest a \$55,000 fine levied by the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission for safety violations at the company's Susquehanna plant.

The NRC said the company violated agency requirements involving diesel generator at the plant, located in Berwick.

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- fire -

- with one on a first-floor for her mother-in-law.

The fire broke out at the base of a chimney in the Davis family's side of the duplex, she said. Hydetown Fire Chief Tom Stympruch said a state police fire marshal ruled the fire accidental from a wood stove.

It also was fortunate for the family that Deputy's business behind the family home was not damaged. He is a self-employed machinist and welder.

Anyone with a home available, may call the family at (814) 694-2284.

- father -

Reports of the accident indicated that Brandon died when his mother's car passed over his body.

Titusville police said Brandon had been taken from the scene before they arrived and Mrs. Goodwill's car had been moved.

- middle -

in candidates voted against acceptance of the approval.

Fox told the board he has been involved in interviewing board members, staff, administration and the public concerning their suggestions for educational needs and renovations at the junior-senior high when the middle school is complete.

Fox asked the board to study the plans - which are very preliminary - and they would be discussed at the January committee meeting.

He compared the estimated costs of renovating the junior-senior high to new construction as \$8 million to \$9 million versus \$17.5 million.

Fox said he is working to keep a reasonable budget with a maximum reimbursement of \$1.5 million. A proposed auditorium, he said, will need careful consideration prior to a decision.