

Dairy Science Department Activities

Dr. Roger P. Natzke, Chairman

Each year it is my privilege to report to you some of the significant accomplishments of the previous year and share with you some of the concerns of the department. This year has been a very exciting one for us.

Florida Ag in the 80's

One of the truly significant events of the year was the implementation of our segment of the Florida Ag in the 80's program. You will recall from last year that members of the dairy advisory committee, the Dairy Science faculty and faculty members with interest in dairy from other departments prepared a report to project the probable status of the industry in 1990. In addition the committee made a list of changes in program thrust so that the department could better meet the needs of the industry.

Suggested New Emphasis Areas

Computer Use

The computer has become an integral part of our undergraduate curriculum. Our newest faculty member, Dr. DeLorenzo, developed an advanced dairy management course which is based almost entirely on computer based examples. From now on it will be virtually impossible to get a degree in Dairy Science without being computer competent. Dr. Van Horn is starting to use the computers in his nutrition course and the computer is being used by Dr. Harris for developing rations in his extension effort. Thanks to a grant from Upper Florida Milk Producers and Independent Dairy Farmers of Ft. Lauderdale, Dr. Webb was able to establish a computer software center in the department. The center's objective is to assemble software programs for the dairy industry. A special program to assess the economic consequences of the Dairy Diversion was one of the first successful projects. Programs developed at other Land Grant Colleges are being tested to determine if they apply to the Florida situation.

Biotechnology

On the research side it was recognized that some major advances would come from applications available through biotechnology or genetic engineering. Using techniques gained through their sabbatical leaves, Drs. Collier and Thatcher will be using this new technology to speed the progress of their research programs.

Forage Production

As a result of the dairymen input, the Department will soon launch a large forage research and extension program. The administration agreed to provide us with a new faculty position to develop this area. The person employed will have a responsibility for selecting suitable forages for high producing dairy cows and putting together a system of growing, harvesting, storage and feeding. The Departments of Agricultural Engineering, Agronomy and Animal Science will all cooperate in the effort. Finding some suitable forages to reduce the cost of feeding should be a major step forward in allowing our dairymen to compete economically with their Northern neighbors.

New Building

At last years conference I encouraged you to contact your elected officials to convince them that they should put the item back into the budget to provide planning money for our new building. They not only came up with the planning money they provided the building money as well. It's a dream come true. Watching them pour concrete and lay block is a real boost to the morale of the department. I drive past the building site regularly to convince myself that it is real. This new building will allow us to have our entire faculty to be under one roof. It will have new modern laboratories and a teaching laboratory for our specialized needs. Being attached to the Animal Science Building will allow us to use some specialized joint facilities and provide a closer working relationship between the scientists of the two departments. The project should be nearing completion by this time next year.

Budget

The cost of conducting research continues to increase at a rapid rate, while the money available from the State has been remaining constant or declining. This is a fact of life and our faculty is making a concerted effort to secure outside funds to keep their programs going.

In looking at the situation in the department, we feel that a major limitation is due to the way money is provided to IFAS and then to the Department. At the start of each fiscal year we are provided a budget to cover all costs. If, during the year, the cost of feed goes up we have to cut back on research so that we can feed the cows. All income from cull cows and milk goes back to the state. We feel that a better concept would be to develop a revolving fund. The following proposal has been presented to the Agricultural Council and in turn to the legislature.

Legislative grant \$300,000

Objective: To develop a method of financing program and maintenance costs of large animal research herds and provide the flexibility needed to adjust and respond to the research needs of the industry.

Use of funds

These funds will be used to maintain facilities and cattle in a manner which will relate as well as possible to conditions faced by farmers growing cattle and producing milk in the Florida environment. Milk and animal sales will support base expenditures but an advance account balance is needed to cover expenditures that will precede income.

The money will be placed in the revolving fund and will insure a positive cash balance at all times. It will cover all expenditures such as purchase of cattle which are needed to initiate a research trial, cost of feed, added labor, seed and fertilizer, building and equipment maintenance and machinery replacement. Income from the pool of milk and cull animals will be returned to the fund to maintain an average yearly balance of \$300,000. Thus once the fund is established it will continue to perpetuate itself without additional state appropriation. It is anticipated that between \$300,000 and \$450,000 from sales of milk and animals will pass through the fund each year.

Industry Support

Once again I would like to say a special thanks to the Industry for their support.

1. The Advisory Committee and its chairman, Woody Larsen, for their guidance and input into our program.
2. Our milk cooperatives, the George Richardson family and Mr. Clarence Reaves for providing financial support for scholarships for our undergraduates.
3. To our dairymen who spent many hours working with their representatives to convince them to fund our new building.
4. Mr. and Mrs. Wilmer Bassett for their very generous gift of stock.
5. To those dairymen who allowed us to use their cows and records to conduct research studies.