

Mercer County Farm Bureau

Newsletter of the Mercer County Farm Bureau

A quarterly publication

August 2023

DATES TO REMEMBER

MCFB Board Meeting

County Board meets 7:30 p.m., the first Monday of the month, at the Pig Barn, Munnell Run Farm, adjusted (due to Labor Day) for the September meeting to Tuesday, September 5

August 25

Policy Development Meeting

FALL ANNUAL DINNER MEETING September 30

6:30 PM

Mercer County Extension Office
Reservations due
September 22

RENEW MEMBERSHIP

Sept 30 for \$1,000 entry

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Mercer County PA
Farm Bureau



LOCAL, STATE, AND NATIONAL LEGISLATORS CONVERGE ON IRISHTOWN ACRES



Mercer County Farm Bureau members pose with legislators who attended the meeting

Irishtown Acres in Grove City served as the site for the legislative tour that was held on August 11. The Paxton family served as hosts for the annual event in which Mercer County Farm Bureau invites local, state, and federal elected officials to visit an agricultural site and learn more about current legislation and its impact on the agricultural community.

The event began with a tour of the facilities guided by Steve Paxton, Mercer County Farm Bureau President. The farm in Southeastern Mercer County milks 450 jerseys twice daily and farms 1,700 acres. The 45 minute tour included a visit to several barns, a 32 cow milking parlor as well as the center of operations. In the photo on the right, Mr. Paxton shows the tech side of farming. With the use of an electronic tag on the cow, the Paxton's can get current feedback such as somatic cell count and how many minutes a day the cow is chewing their cud which can indicate the health of the animal. Other information is also tracked.

Upon completion of the tour, Farm Bureau members were able to present the official Farm Bureau position on current legislation that is under consideration. Topics that were discussed can be found on page two. The lawmakers were highly supportive and were given the opportunity to respond and give pertinent updates.



Attendees were then treated to an outstanding meal. The day ended with Michelle Brooks presenting a Pennsylvania Proclamation honoring George and Carol Ann Greggs for their many years of marriage and commitment to service. They have worked tirelessly to promote agriculture. Congratulations!

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Topics Discussed with Elected Officials at Legislative Tour

Milk Bills were brought to the attention of the legislators – one of which deals with getting whole milk back in school. This bill has passed in the House but was not presented in the Senate, so will must be renewed. Another bill is in regards to the transparency and accountability of the Milk Marketing Board concerning how money is gathered and distributed. The final milk bill that was discussed was the Dairy and Farm Bill. Bill Cannon shared that we have lost a generation of milk drinkers because their only exposure to milk has been fat free milk at school. Students don't enjoy the fat free milk and won't drink any milk now. County Commissioner Matt McConnell shared that in his family, a doctor ordered whole milk to be given to their infant for proper nerve development and that it may be wise to get the American Medical Association to support whole milk in schools.

Board member Tim Heeter spoke on Senate Bill 95 which is actually an amendment to an existing law. Farm trucks can currently go from the farm to one destination, such as an ag equipment dealer for parts and then return to the farm. This bill would benefit farmers who deliver their products, such as home delivery of milk, from house to house to house and would not be limited to trucks, it would include box trucks, vans, etc.

Storm Water Management (SWM) was presented by Andrew Spencer. The premise of the bill is good and something everyone agrees upon – clean water – but it does not make any allowances for the vast amount of land on a farm that handles excessive rain runoff. Currently, a fee is determined and assigned according to the area of impervious land you own. The total amount of land that you own is not considered. An exemption for farms is desired.

George Gregg shared about the Dog Law Modernization Bill. It is critical to agriculture. It was originally introduced by sheep farmers who were losing sheep to dogs. There are several points to this bill including accessibility and raising the fee, last raised 30 years ago.

To date, the effort to purchase land in the French Creek watershed by the federal government has not gained traction. Jay Russell shared that 30% of the land in the watershed is in agricultural use. County Commissioner Scott Boyd added that there is a specific site in the watershed where fish/mussels need protection. He went on to suggest that potentially that specific area needs to be protected, not the entire watershed. U. S. Representative Mike Kelly has additional information available by contacting his office.

Elected officials were given time at the end of the presentation to address the farmers and were very supportive of agriculture and recognize that it is the leading industry in Pennsylvania. Scott Boyd revealed that 6 companies were expected to submit proposals for rural broadband. Only 4 companies ultimately submitted proposals. Every PA resident should have low entry level broadband, a expected \$50 monthly fee, by 2025. Residents who qualify will be able to receive assistance for this fee, which would be reduced by \$30 for a total monthly fee of \$20 for internet service.



State Representative Michelle Brooks cautioned those in attendance that the spotted lanternfly has now been located in Lawrence County and that Lawrence County has been added to the quarantine list for this invasive species. They will decimate vineyards as well as hardwoods such as maple and ash trees.

WANTED WANTED WANTED WANTED WANTED WANTED WANTED WANTED WANTED

Let your voice be heard!! Farm Bureau wants to know your concerns about issues facing rural Pennsylvanians. Bill Cannon will be attending a **Policy Development meeting on August 25**. If you have any issues that you would like to see addressed, please contact Bill prior to August 25. Changes have taken place due to members expressing their thoughts. A concern is shared with the policy development committee and then moves to the state annual meeting. If it is a federal concern, it goes to American Farm Bureau's annual meeting. After it has gained the support at those meetings, a sponsor is sought and moves on to legislation if it carries the vote. SO, those things that absolutely make no sense, safety concerns, or any issue pertinent **to ag, please contact Bill Cannon prior to August 25**.

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Renew your PFB membership by September 30 and your name will be entered into a drawing for \$1,000!!!!



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TASK CONFERENCE – FEBRUARY 9/10 - GETTYSBURG

Want to learn how to market your farm? Make plans to attend the TASK Conference on February 9-10 in Gettysburg. The program will include a tour of the battle fields from an ag perspective and how the use of the ag field impacted the battle. More information will be coming out in the next newsletter, but mark your calendars.

FALL DINNER MEETING

The Mercer County Extension Office will be the site of the Mercer County Farm Bureau annual fall meeting on Friday, September 29 at 6:30 p.m. The cost is \$20 per ticket. Reservations need to be submitted by September 22 to Sandy Craft at 814-715-4244

NEW REGIONAL ORGANIZATION DIRECTOR FOR REGION 5

Tyler Anderson has been named the new ROD for Region 5 which includes Mercer County. Tyler raises beef on his farm in Fayette County and is excited to work with the members of Region 5. You can reach Tyler at 412-897-6991 or tcanderson@pfb.com. The function of Regional Organization Directors is to assist the county leaders in developing and carrying out Farm Bureau programs that will help members to maintain a strong, effective organization to meet their needs. They have the authority to organize and plan activities utilizing all resources available to assist members and volunteer leaders in implementing Farm Bureau policies.



MONEY FOR CONSERVATION PRACTICES ON YOUR PROPERTY IS STILL AVAILABLE

Mercer County Conservation District (MCCD) still has funds for conservation practice implementation on agricultural operations. Money must be spent by December 2026. Projects may include converting farming practices to no-till and cover crops to more expensive projects such as barnyard management and manure management systems. For info contact Agricultural Resource Conservationist Nick Trivelli at 724-662-2242 or ntrivelli@mercercountypa.gov

HOW PENNSYLVANIA FARM BUREAU IS WORKING FOR YOU...

In addition to the topics discussed at the legislative tour, your organization is also promoting, advocating, and fighting for agriculture in a plethora of areas such as:

At the state level, Pennsylvania Farm Bureau advocated for the following in this year's budget:

- An increase to the General Government Operations Line for the Department of Agriculture to fund programs and personnel for programs like food safety, animal health and market development. (Included in 23-24 budget)
- An increase to the Agricultural Preparedness and Response line to help combat and respond to HPAI, invasive species and other ag emergencies. (Level funding in 23-24 budget)
- An increase to Penn State Cooperative Extension and Research so our state's Land Grant college can continue its independent research on issues like water quality, pest management, business diversification and technological adaptations in agriculture. (TBD in 23-24 budget)
- Adequate funding for the necessary services provided by the University of Pennsylvania School of Veterinary Medicine. (TBD in 23-24 budget)
- An increase to the University of Pennsylvania's Center for Infectious Diseases line to address zoonotic diseases like Lyme Disease or West Nile Virus. (TBD in 23-24 budget)
- Restoration of the Animal Health and Diagnostic Commission line and the Livestock and Consumer Protection line. HPAI highlights the need for these programs to remain viable. (Included in 23-24 budget)

Farm Bureau Testifies Before PA House Environmental Resources & Energy Committee On How Pennsylvania Farmers are Improving the Chesapeake Bay

Farm Bureau President Chris Hoffman testified at a June 26 Pennsylvania House Environmental Resources & Energy Committee hearing on the ongoing efforts to restore the Chesapeake Bay.

On the federal level, Pennsylvania Farm Bureau is working on legislation including the Ending Agricultural Trade Suppression (EATS) Act Introduced

In 2018, CA's voters passed a law called Proposition 12 that requires veal, pork, and egg raised in confined areas to have a certain space minimum. Egg-laying hens must be cage-free; sows must have at least 24 square feet of usable floor space; and cows used for veal must have at least 43 square feet of usable floor space. This means that an operation which is not Prop 12 certified, cannot sell their products in CA. On June 16th, Senator Marshall (R-KS) along with Senators Ernst (R-IA), Grassley (R-IA), Cornyn (R-TX), Fischer (R-NE), Schmitt (R-MO), and Cotton (R-AR) introduced S.2019, the Ending Agricultural Trade Suppression (EATS) Act. S.2019 would be the legislative solution to Prop 12 by prohibiting other states and local units of government from regulating the preharvest production of agricultural products in other jurisdictions. A House companion bill will be introduced shortly by Representative Ashley Hinson (R-IA). This is a priority for PFB, and we would urge Senators Casey and Fetterman to support S.2019 to prevent increased food costs and food insecurity.

FYI

FDA Guidance on Medically Important Antimicrobial Drugs Requiring Prescriptions Now in Effect

On June 11, the two-year implementation period for the Food & Drug Administration's (FDA) guidance for industry (GFI #263) regarding "medically important" anti-microbial drugs that are used by many Pennsylvania farmers. The intention of the guidance is to make sure that anti-microbial drugs are used judiciously, specifically in a manner that does not promote anti-microbial resistance in humans or animals.

The effect of this guidance is to require that all new affected products entering the marketplace have prescription labeling, and bring under veterinary oversight all products that continue to be available over the counter (OTC). FDA intends to allow all existing inventory of OTC products already in distribution to be purchased in that manner until inventories deplete. Once supply of these products runs out, a veterinarian's prescription will be needed. The products and their approved uses will not change.

Pennsylvania Farm Bureau

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Publications

PFB adds value to membership and keeps members informed through a variety of print and digital publications. Members receive 5% off advertising rates in our print publications. Contact advertising coordinator for details.

A total \$6 portion of annual member dues covers subscriptions to these publications, \$3 for Positively Pennsylvania and \$3 for Pennsylvania Farm Bureau Grassroots Advocate (formerly Country Focus). Members receive 4 issues of each publication per year on a quarterly basis. Publication frequency and details are subject to change.



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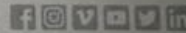
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Steve Paxton, President
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The dinner is at 6:30 p.m. on September 29, *at the Mercer County Extension Office, Route 19, Mercer, PA 16137*

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