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The average farmer today doesn't chew on hayseeds

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Chances are you've never read *Hog Farm Management*.

It's not exactly like reading Irving Wallace, the Hite Report or *People* magazine. But many people connected with farming and advertising pay a great deal of attention to the publication and others like it.

Count several people at Philadelphia's Lewis & Gilman among them. They include: Ron Richter, senior vice president/account management; Denny Eilers, director of agricultural chemicals and equipment advertising; Roger Randall, agricultural products account executive; Ann Carmody, agricultural public relations manager, and Sandra Shaw, PR counselor.

Richter was a senior writer/pharmaceuticals at SmithKline; Eilers, who was raised on a farm, has a degree from Iowa State University in agricultural journalism; Randall was director of advertising for a chemical company and a feed firm, and Ms. Carmody was ad and PR manager for the North American Plant Breeders Association and has a journalism degree from the University of Missouri.

According to Ms. Shaw, agency personnel get involved with such clients and products as Amchem: Ethrel (a growth regulator), Amiben (soybean herbicide), Butyrac (specific soybean herbicide), Brominal (grain herbicide) and about 50 other smaller-market crop chemicals; SmithKline Corp.: Stafac (feed additive), Valbazen (livestock wormer),



Denny Eilers

... 'little impulse buying'

Furox (general over-the-counter medicine) and Bloatguard (preventive of cattle bloat); Pennwalt Corp.: Penncap-M (insecticide), Accelerate (cotton harvest aid), Kryocide (insecticide for use on grapes) and Hydout (aquatic herbicide) and several other aquatics.

Doesn't sound very sexy, but you'd be surprised at the money involved.

For instance, agricultural advertising billings represent more than

10 percent of L&G's estimated 1979 billings of \$50 million. And, according to a Pennsylvania State University economist, farm cash receipts in Pennsylvania alone in 1977 (which ranked the state 18th nationally that year) amounted to \$1.9 billion.

(In terms of 1977 cash receipts nationally Pennsylvania ranked No. 4 for apples, No. 5 for dairy products, No. 7 for grapes and No. 9 for tomatoes.)

Randall noted that the assets of American agriculture in a year "will exceed the assets of all the New York Stock Exchange-listed companies. According to L&G officials, net farm income in the U.S. runs in the tens of billions of dollars annually.

The Northeast corridor is one busy area for activity as is the Chicago/Kansas City triangle. And there are many companies headquartered or with branches in the Philadelphia area involved with agriculture and/or ag advertising. These include Rohm & Haas Co., Eli Lilly, American Cyanamid, Shell Oil, Phillips Petroleum and London-based ICI Ltd.

SmithKline, for one, is heavily involved with animal health items; ICI is active in crop chemicals.

Farmers and their suppliers — and people involved with "ag" advertising — spend lots of time reading material like *Farm Journal* (published in Philadelphia), *Successful Farming*, *Progressive Farmer*, *Pennsylvania Farmer*, *American Agriculturalist*, *American Cotton Grower*, *Soybean Digest*, *Beef*, *Hoard's Dairyman* and a whole barn full of other publications.

But there is situation endemic to ag products and their advertising. According to Eilers, "dealer recommendations on products are very important and there is very little impulse buying." On the other hand, advertising for many products and services in our economy is geared specifically to stimulating or trying to channel impulse buying.

According to *Madison Avenue*, some ad agencies have even formed separate divisions to deal with the growing ag advertising area.

The magazine stated recently that, in general, these agencies have found that "the farmer is no hayseed chewing a stick of grass. This stereotyped image began disappearing as clients and agencies realized the farmer was as sophisticated as the highly advanced technology he employs in choosing which crops would be planted where and when" and other important factors of the farm's operations.

Richter describes the ag business as being "intensely competitive and highly regulated. The Federal Drug Administration or the Environmental Protection Agency can reject the clearance of a product and not even tell you why." Or the clearance pro-

cess "can take longer than that of a personal drug," he added.

Richter feels there is "nothing wrong with what the EPA or FDA do; it's the slowness of the process" to get approval of new products. "It takes so terribly long, and it leads to increased costs and the compromising of patents," he added.

All of this, Eilers said, adds to a "tremendous revolution in agriculture from a completely diversified farm" to where there has been a decrease in the number of farms but a large increase in the gross receipts of the remaining farms.

Even the media used to advertise to these farmers has shifted and the publications have different editorial emphasis, he added, stressing that a company trying to advertise to today's farmer has "to reach him as though he was a purchasing agent for a small company and tell him how we can help him."

Richter noted that "TV (time) buys a lot of waste because the average American consumer (aside from the farmer) is watching the same commercial" — and they don't buy a heckuva lot of herbicides, insecticides and additives. Yet Randall

added that the "sophistication (of advertising aimed at farmers) is equal to consumer product advertising" in general.

"Radio is used more heavily" than other media, he said, and, Eilers noted, "outdoor advertising works fine for specific, confined areas;" i.e., ads for pinto bean farmers in a seven-county area of Michigan.

Ms. Carmody noted that agricultural PR often deals with "testimonials from users of the products" which L&G handles and "case histories in the leading publications." She noted that there are more than 300 agricultural publications for farm bureaus, coops, special breeder associations, sales and product training, management guides and seminars.

It also involves direct-mail letters and educational material with very specialized writing.

Eilers stressed, "We have to know the difference between farmers and what motivates them, even between cattle people in different parts of the country. We get into the field with mud on our boots. We can't just know advertising and public relations."