

Ah sow...Nebraska kids farm in Japan

By Tammy Kaup

Ten young Nebraskans, ages 16 to 19, will be awarded travel and living scholarships to Japan through a grant by the United States Information Agency.

John Orr, specialist with the state 4-H department arranged the first-year program, called Project Link.

Orr said the project is a counterpart to the agricultural training program for young Japanese farmers which has brought 1,200 trainees to Nebraska since it began 18 years ago.

The American farmers will live and work with farm families in Japan from May 30 to July 22. They will study Japanese culture and agriculture and focus on Nebraska-Japan trade.

"(The delegates) will have an opportunity to think about their own careers in terms of the world," Orr said.

An interview committee will select delegates on March 1.

The committee will choose them on the basis of their interest in the Japanese culture and economy, knowledge of agriculture, interpersonal relations and willingness to share the experience when they return home, Orr said.

The delegates know how to work with farm machinery and livestock and understand various fertilizers and farming methods. A committee in Japan will make the final selection. Orr said anyone is welcome to apply.

Delegates will learn the Japanese grain handling system and agricultural trade issues important to Nebraska and Japan, Orr said. Japan, the world's largest importer of farm products, spent more than \$5 billion in 1983.

The Nebraska Cooperative Extension Service will help delegates become familiar with Japanese language, culture, agriculture, and trade issues.

"Our job is to make sure they have a quality experience," Orr said. "That's what the university is all about — knowledge, skills, and attitudes."

Informational meetings will take place Feb. 13 and Feb. 15 at 4 p.m. in the East Campus Union. Applications are available from the State 4-H Department at 116 Agricultural Hall. The deadline is March 1.

90 percent effective

Spermicidal sponge safe and sure

By Susan Kisicki

Another attempt has been made in the never-ending search for safe, sure birth control. But, like all the former attempts, the contraceptive sponge has its drawbacks.

The sponge, called "Today", is manufactured by the VLI Corporation.

Terry Collins, medical department coordinator at VLI, said the sponge is two-inches in diameter, is made of polyurethane foam, and fits in the cervical opening.

The sponge must be wet to release the spermicide, she said, and this can be done up to 24 hours before use. It must be kept in for six hours following intercourse, Collins said.

By releasing the spermicide, covering the cervical opening and soaking-up semen, the sponge effectively precludes pregnancy approximately 90 percent of the time, she said.

Although it doesn't match the effectiveness of the birth control pills or an IUD, Collins said, it doesn't have the risks of chemical side-effects and infections. Because it can be inserted up to 24 hours in advance, she said, it doesn't interfere with spontaneity, like the diaphragm or foams.

Collins said four toxic shock cases are on record among women using the sponge. But, she said, the Food and Drug Administration and the Center for Disease Control could not prove that the sponge causes toxic shock. She said the women were using tampons in conjunction with the sponge, and three of them used the device incorrectly.

Jim Oehm, chief pharmacist at the University Health Center, said he thought the contraceptive sponge was generally safe.

He said the health center, which has sold the contraceptive sponge for about three weeks, hasn't received any complaints yet. He said it was fairly popular.

Collins said despite the bad publicity, VLI can't keep up with the demand. It has been on the market since July, she said, after the FDA approved it in April.

Ken Killman, an educator at Planned Parenthood of Lincoln, said the sponge is very popular in the west, but it is too soon to tell in the Lincoln area. He

Killman said, Today, just like all other birth control devices, it is not the only answer. He said it will work well for some, but not for others. Although no casual relationship was found in the toxic shock cases, women should be aware of the correlation, he said, and should never use it during menstruation.

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