



CHECKING THEIR instruments and some of the seed potatoes after their arrival in Lancaster last week are Howard W. Hruschka, left, and Wilson Smith, both from the USDA Plant Industry Station at Beltsville.

Hruschka is holding a recording thermometer which will record temperatures for a month. Behind them are two alcohol heaters (LF Photo)

## Machine Cutting, Forced Healing Making Potato Planting Easier

One of the most tedious chores in farming is on the way out with a new process being developed by Eastern States Cooperative and the United States Department of Agriculture.

It is a method where-by seed potatoes are cut mechanically and shipped to the farmer ready to plant. The project is now several years old.

Pre-cutting in seed potatoes is possible because of a property peculiar to potatoes called "suberization." This means that a cut potato will grow a new skin after it has been cut if the proper conditions of temperature and humidity are available.

The USDA is now developing a method of forced suberization while the potatoes are in shipment.

This was used in a boxcar of potatoes received here in the County last week. The car was sealed in Maine and opened only after it had arrived in Lancaster.

Inside the car were alcohol burners to keep the temperature at an even level between 60 and 70 degrees. The humidity stayed at about 90 per cent.

Fans powered by a generator run from the moving wheels of the car kept the air in motion, thus keeping the temperatures uniform throughout the car, even inside the piles of sacks.

Last year was the first time that major field trials were made with the pre-cut seed. Only small amounts of the seed were available to each farmer.

Results of the trial showed that germination and yield were just as good with the pre-cuts as with hand cut seed. There was much more variation in yield and than there was between types of seed.

This will be the first year that the cooperative will have enough seed available to make carload-lot shipments.

The machines that cut the potatoes sort the tubers for size and then make the number of (Continued on page fourteen)

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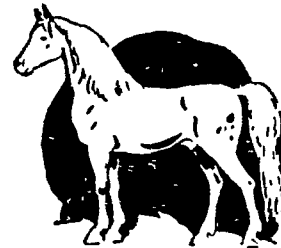
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