

Open Containers Poor Salesmen Vegetable Growers Told

Pennsylvania produce growers, packers and shippers must reappraise the consequences of the continued use of open damaged and dirty containers for their products when shipped to terminal markets, says Roland G. Harris, State Agriculture Department marketing specialist.

It is probably needless to point out that growers and shippers in the large produce areas of the South and West Coast — and many local growers and shippers who have been "marketing conscious" — long ago adopted sound, closed containers that were most suitable for protecting and shipping each commodity, Harris says. However, a number of Pennsylvania growers still use open containers such as the 16-quart and 1/8 bushel basket to ship peaches, apples, tomatoes, peppers, egg plants, sweet potatoes and the like to large nearby wholesale terminal markets.

Many growers also ship produce to market in used containers that are sometimes badly worn, broken or damaged, and dirty because of the cost advantage of the used container compared with a new one.

"It is probably necessary, therefore, to remind some growers that their 'pack' must compete for sale in the wholesale market with quality 'packs' from many sections of the country and locally," Harris says. "Buyers

purchase produce mainly on appearance and external characteristics, and often as not, the appearance of the container or 'pack' itself is as important to the sale as the appearance of the produce."

Harris says that this, in itself, should be good enough reason for farmers to discontinue the use of dirty and damaged used containers and open containers that do not protect the quality of the produce.

"Recent labor cost studies by the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture's Bureau of Markets in wholesale produce stores in the Philadelphia Food Distribution Center show that labor costs for handling open produce containers and damaged containers are more than double the costs for handling sound, closed containers."

"Most open containers of the basket type are difficult to stack, store and transport to market. Open containers take up valuable selling space and refrigerator space in wholesale and retail stores transportation costs for the farmer and buyer are higher because trucks have to be racked to support open containers. The other alternative is transporting a much smaller truckload, with a resultant higher transportation cost per unit.

There is still a stronger case against the use of open and damaged containers, according to Harris.

"Many studies on produce handling have pointed out the advantages of pallets and skids for handling produce. Most of the chain stores and many of the larger independent produce wholesalers, are now handling 100 per cent of

Earl Fisher Wins Boar Pig At Field Day

A purebred Landrace boar pig was awarded to Earl Fisher, swine herdsman, of the Stauffer Homestead Farms, for his first place win in the judging contest at the annual field day sponsored by the Lancaster County Swine Producers Association.

The July 23 event at the farm of James Martin, East Earl attracted over 50 swine

producers and their families. Other winners in the men's division of the contest were, in order of their placing, Darvin Boyd, Ira Dombach; Abram Z. Martin and Norman Kolb.

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In the ladies' division, the winner was Mary Martin, followed by Annabelle Skiles, Mary Zeiset and Sally Leininger, in that order.

Juniors in the contest were topped by John Hess, with Henna Dombach, Robert Fisher, Glen Smoker and James Dombach following in the scoring.

Norman Kolb and Raymond H. Weaver tied in the weight guessing contest and each took home a ham as a reward for his accurate estimate.

During the afternoon program, Grant Shmitt, Lester Burdette, swine specialist led the discussion on swine care and management.

The association will have a sale of purebred gilts and boar pigs today at 100 Blue Ball.

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"Therefore, the open container is immediately passed up by the chain store buyers and larger wholesale buyers in the terminal market, potentially the largest buying groups, and is left for the hucksters, peddlers and bargain hunters in the market."

"The time has arrived when those farmers and shippers who bargain hunt to save a few pennies on badly worn, used containers or open containers, must settle for bargain prices," Harris concludes.

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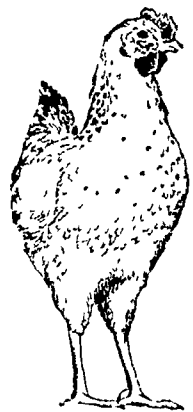
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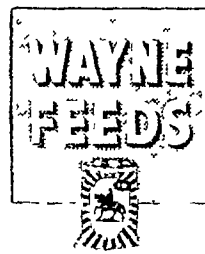
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