



**WILD DUCKS** use Weavers' ponds to raise their young. Roy and Mrs. Weaver enjoy having them around and throw out liberal handfuls of feed for the feathered brood daily.

L. F. Photo

**Farm Ponds**

(Continued from Page 8)

Then, if you manage to deal effectively with all of these hungry creatures and thus preserve your pond product, you have to worry about muskrats ruining the pond itself by burrowing holes in the walls so the pond won't hold water.

In addition, the operator

has to keep after excessive growth of waterweeds and filamentous algae. Weaver has found that a combination of fertilizer and weed-control chemicals takes care of this problem. As Houseknecht explained, fertilizer (either a 20-20-5 or 8-8-2 analysis) applied early in the spring encourages the growth of microscopic al-

gae and plankton. If these extend to a depth of about 18 inches, they shut off sunlight penetration necessary to the growth of waterweeds and filamentous algae. You can tell when you have a satisfactory population of algae and plankton, Houseknecht said, by the brownish-green appearance of the water.

**BAIT-FISH PRODUCTION**

Besides dealing with all the natural factors which try to put the bait-fish producer out of business, Weaver has the fish themselves to contend with.

"It takes us about two seasons to produce a marketable minnow," he said, adding that he has heard of it being done in less time by some, but that he hasn't managed it.

The fish are fed twice a day to get them growing faster. We watched Mrs. Weaver mixing up a batch of "home-made" feed for one pond which consisted of meat scrap, cottonseed meal, middlings and water. Sometimes this is fed wet, and other times simply scattered in dry form on the water.

The fish are sold to bait stores for resale to fishermen. Most of Weaver's customers come to the farm and haul the bait in their own containers, but in some cases Weaver has to deliver the order.

The fish are "harvested" by tossing in metal fish traps tied to a line. These traps are two

basket halves which lock together. He may pull in 50 to 150 minnows with each cast. The traps are then emptied into a homemade, portable grader which sits in the water where the operator is working. The screen on the grader is designed to hold only market-sized fish, permitting the under-sized fish to escape.

When do you market fish? Weaver said he gets calls for fish as late in the season as December and as early as February. "It pretty much follows the fishing season," he said, adding that "with ice fishing getting so popular, it seems the fishing season is getting longer each year."

The Weavers have also been raising shiners, a larger bait fish, but have found they are considerably harder to grow than fatheads.

**WATER SUPPLY**

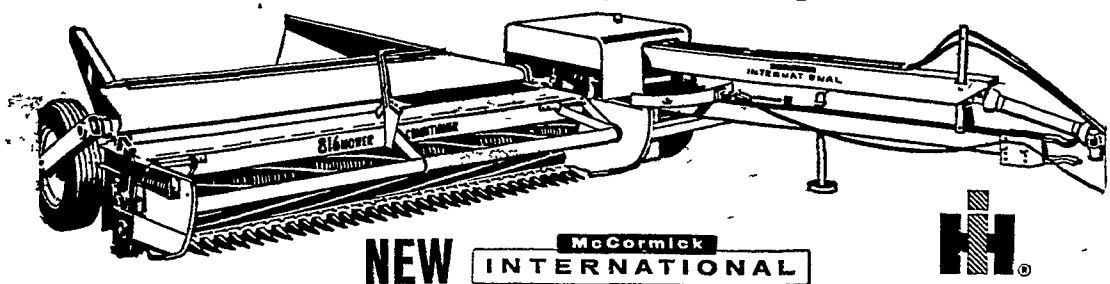
One vital ingredient in a

successful fish business is a reliable supply of pure water. Weaver has a spring delivering 15 gallons per minute. This is piped into the 20x20-foot, concrete holding pool, and from there, successively, to five ponds in a row. Weaver said this was not the safest way to handle the water supply since contamination in any one of the upper ponds would be passed to all of those below it through the continuous water supply.

Another important ingredient in successfully operating any pond is a nearby creek. Weaver doesn't use his creek as a water source for fear of some contaminant killing the fish. However, he does use it to handle by-pass water from the spring when necessary, or when draining one of the ponds.

(Other picture on Page 12)

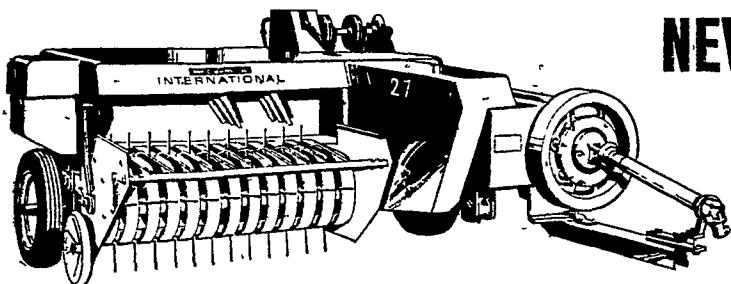
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