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Lancaster Farming

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For the Best Returns, County Agent advises:

Cut Hay at Right Maturity Stage

Now is the time for farmers to begin to consider very carefully when to cut their hay and grass silage, Max Smith, county agent, said this week.

"It's very important to recognize the correct and proper stage of maturity for harvesting. This is important to get the most feed value," Smith said.

Smith explained that if the crop is allowed to stand beyond the proper cutting stage, it actually loses feed value, instead of gaining, as many farmers believe, by allowing them to mature before cutting, they're actually losing. The hay that has lost some of its feed value doesn't produce as many pounds of meat on livestock or as much milk for the dairyman as does the crop which was cut at the right time, Smith said.

"Too many farmers," Smith warned, "permit the crop to mature too much or get too ripe. This loses feed nutrients including protein and carbohydrates."

He also said that two crops which have the same weight yield per acre may vary substan-

tially in their feed value. The crop cut at the right stage of maturity will have a higher feed value which will provide better gains for livestock or greater milk production for dairy animals, while the older forage will consist of more fiber and less feed value, thereby providing smaller productive results for the farmer.

Smith said Lancaster led the state in hay output in 1969 with 243,100 tons valued at \$7,657,500. "Hay is very important here particularly to dairymen," he said.

But to get the maximum value out of the approximately 85,000 acres of hay in the county, the farmer must cut his crop in the proper stages of maturity, condition it properly and try to get it under cover without being rained on, Smith said.

Smith gave the following guidelines to help the farmer determine when to cut to achieve maximum feed value.

For grasses such as timothy, orchard grass, brome and red

canary grass maximum feed value will be obtained by harvesting at "heading time." That is when the seed head starts to emerge from the top of the plant.

Alfalfa cutting time varies for older, established stands and first year alfalfa.

For established alfalfa cut in the bud stage. This is just prior to the bloom.

Alfalfa being cut the first time will last longer if 10 to 20 percent of the plants are allowed to reach the bloom stage before cutting, Smith said.

Later cuttings of alfalfa should be made every 35 days, according to the latest research.

Red, alsike and ladino clover are all at their peak feed value when cut in the early blossom stage with 20 to 50 percent blooms.

Small grains such as winter wheat or winter barley and oats may be cut for silage and their top feed value would be from blossom to early milk stage. "These grains do not make high quality hay and are therefore suggested for use as silage only," Smith advised.

He continued, "All the above crops cut for either hay or silage, should be conditioned in the field immediately after mowing. This includes the use of a crimper or a crusher to mash the stems to permit more rapid drying of the plant."

Asked to explain crimping, crimping and conditioning and how it's done, Smith gave the following rundown.

Conditioning can include either a crusher which mashes the stem completely or a crimper which mashes the stem at intervals of about one-inch.

"Either one will do the job of expediting the drying process in the field by exposing the plant juices to evaporation. This makes hay drying much faster."

"This (conditioning) enables the farmer to get the hay into the barn much faster and helps avoid getting it wet."

"Normally, (with conditioning) it takes two days to dry the first cutting sufficiently, but later cuttings can sometimes be put into the barn the same day."

Smith estimates about 90 percent of county farmers condition their hay, a process which has just gained wide acceptance within the past 20 years.

The conditioning is done in this area by one of two methods.

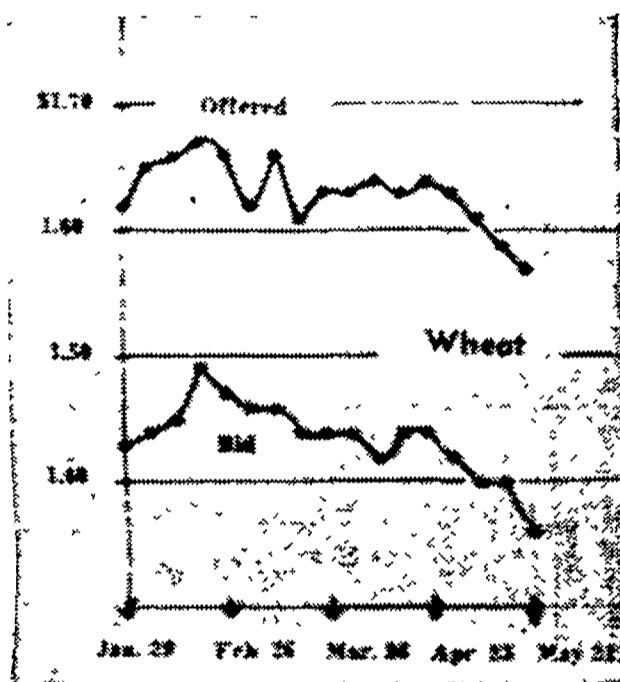
Some farmers use a haybine, which cuts, conditions (either crimping or crushing) and windrows all in one operation. For heavier stands it's sometimes necessary to turn these windrows over before gathering to allow proper drying. But essentially the haybine combines three operations — cutting, conditioning and windrowing — into one.

The other widely used method

involves a separate mowing machine to cut the crop, followed immediately by a separate trip over the field with a conditioner (either a crimper or crusher), followed by a hay rake to win-

now the crop for the pick-up baler or field chopper.

The principles for making both hay and silage are the same except that the drying process is longer for hay, Smith said.



We Begin Local Grain Prices in Graph Form

Lancaster Farming this week introduces a new feature to assist local farmers.

It is a presentation in graph form of the local grain prices we began in January.

The graph presentation, we hope, will make it easier to see not only the grain prices at a glance, but also to see what those prices were last week and the week before.

The graph also will help make it possible for farmers to spot trends in the grain prices and possibly to base buying and selling activities in part on these trends.

The local grain prices Lancaster Farming carries are actually the average of prices quoted to us each Thursday by six local feed and grain concerns.

We carry both the bid price (the price at which the mills will buy from farmers delivered to the mill) and the offered

price (the price at which the dealer will sell at his mill).

We carry the bid and offered prices on five grains: ear corn, shelled corn, oats, barley and wheat. The prices this week are as follows:

	Bid	Offered
Corn (ear)	\$36.67	\$41.33
Corn (shelled)	1.46	1.62
Oats	.74	.81
Barley	1.01	1.18
Wheat	1.36	1.57

In the future we plan to carry in graph form both the bid and offered prices of one of these five grains each week on a rotating basis. We began this week with wheat.

The graph shows that on the average, the six mills in our survey are paying \$1.36 for wheat at the mill this week and they are selling it for \$1.57. While the buying price by dealers is down four cents from last week at \$1.40, the selling price to farmers has dropped two cents from last week. Four weeks ago, on April 23, local farmers were getting an average of \$1.44 for their wheat, but the average cost at the mill also was higher, \$1.64.

Since we began keeping the data on wheat, the high bid (price to farmer) and offered (cost to farmer) both reached highs on our February 19 report. At that time, the bid was (Continued on Page 3)

County Agricultural Leaders To Discuss Environment Issue

The Lancaster County ASC Committee has scheduled a meeting of agricultural agencies and groups in the County for 9:30 a.m. Tuesday, May 26, in the Farm and Home Center.

Purpose of the meeting is to get suggestions and recommendations for improvement of ASCS programs to help the American farmer do an even more effective job of improving the environment while conserving and building the nation's soil and water resources.

The objectives are to assure emphasis on clean air and water, more open space and more and better wildlife habitat, assure effective conservation accomplishments and provide emphasis on conservation and environmental improvement activities having public benefits.

The meeting will be conducted by Richard A. Pennay, district

director, Pennsylvania State ASC Committee.

Recommendations of the county group will be forwarded to the State ASC Committee and through them to USDA in Washington for use in development of ASCS programs for 1971.

We Salute Dairying!

Lancaster County dairy farmers sold \$37,039,000 of milk in 1969, maintaining dairying as the most important farm income producer for the state's most productive agricultural county.

Lancaster Farming will recognize the county's dynamic dairy industry in its June 6 Special Dairy Issue.

Lancaster Farming extends a special invitation to dairy groups and organizations to submit articles and news on dairying for the Dairy Issue.

Advertisers are invited to make their own appeal to a large segment of the Southeastern Pennsylvania dairy market.

To be sure to make the Dairy Issue, please submit all material by Wednesday, June 3.

Call us at 394-3047 or 626-2191. Or write to Lancaster Farming, Box 266, Lititz, Pa. 17543.

Farm Calendar

Monday, May 25

3:00 p.m. — Lancaster County FFA Leadership Conference Garden Spot High School

8:00 p.m. — DHIA board, Farm and Home Center

8:00 p.m. — County FFA Chapter meeting, Solanco High School

Tuesday, May 26

3:00 a.m. - 5:30 p.m. — Conference on Air Pollution Control (Continued on Page 6)