

Meat Inspection

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his assistant were both fired. A veterinarian took over, and he tried to do a good job. But the feds were after him so much that he spent all his time trying to placate them, and no time trying to improve the meat inspection program.

"In November of last year I took over. First I went to Washington. I told the USDA we were conducting a crash program. We were going to find out what the deficiencies were, and we were going to correct them. They said they'd heard the same story too often before.

"On December 16, a few weeks after I was on the job, we got a notice that they were going to designate the state. They were threatening to take away our meat program, and they gave us 30 days to do something about it.

"We went all out. I personally visited practically every one of the plants in the state of Pennsylvania, and there are nearly 700. We

found deficiencies, things that should have been caught in 1970. We discovered that this state should never have been certified in the first place.

"Almost all the major deficiencies we found were in the custom exempt operators, those butchers who do custom work for local farmers. In January and February of this year, we closed 126 operations, and we issued defect notices to 300 others.

"We cracked down on the industry. Nobody had ever done this before. Then in March, we had to face a budget battle.

"I'm not sure why Governor Shapp decided not to include funds for meat inspection in his budget for this fiscal year. But I can guess. He was getting a big political headache from meat inspection. He was also under a lot of pressure to cut costs. By dropping meat inspection from the budget, he eased some of the pressure, he got rid of the headache.

"Even so, we convinced the Governor that Pennsylvania should have its own meat inspection program, and he did put the money, \$1.4 million, back in the budget.

"The states that have let the federal government take over their programs have lost. They've lost a good 50 percent of their small meat operations, they've suffered losses to their livestock industries and to their feed and grain industries. These were the arguments we used to convince the Governor.

"OK. We had the money. We were hiring more personnel. We had shut down plants. We came a long way in a really short time. But still the complaints from Washington didn't stop.

"Washington changed directions, though. Where they had complained about personnel before, they now said we didn't include enough reinspection in our program. In other words, we didn't analyze finished product often enough, for fat content, labelling, additives and so forth. So we asked USDA to give us guidelines on what they felt would be an adequate reinspection program.

"They didn't give us any guidelines. They just said we didn't have enough. To me, that means they thought we weren't equal to their program in compliance and surveillance activity. We had seven compliance and surveillance people for the state of Pennsylvania. USDA only has nine compliance and surveillance people for all the federally inspected meat plants in the nine Northeastern states. I'd say we were more than equal to in this area.

"Nothing we did mattered, though. On June 16, the state of Pennsylvania was designated. We were told that unless we could upgrade our program, the federal government would take over on July 17. We didn't know what to do. We took the matter to court, but we lost. The case is being appealed now, but it looks pretty dim.

"On June 21, the first day of the worst floods we've ever had, the USDA started to review our plants. They went to every one of them. The inspectors were supposedly going out there to see if the plants were operating under sanitary conditions.

"We sent some of our people along, though, and we found out that the federal people weren't really inspecting the plants. They were walking through them, and spending most of their time trying to convince the plant manager that federal inspection was going to be much better.

"These federal inspectors were supposed to fill out review forms after each plant was inspected.

The first few days, though, the forms didn't get filled out. We got hold of the USDA's Harrisburg Office, and we griped.

"A few days later, we got forms from the plants that had already been reviewed. We looked at those forms pretty closely, there were forty or fifty of them, and we thought they looked strange. We showed them to the State Police, and they told us that all the forms had been filled out by the same two people. And the same two people had signed a lot of different signatures on the bottoms of the forms.

"We found out that those two people were Dr. Farber and Dr. Knipe, from the USDA's office here in Harrisburg. We said that what they did was forgery. They said it was an administrative expedient.

"What's going on here? If they're only interested in wholesome meat, why are they pulling so many stunts?"

"Another thing I don't understand. Tons of meat are processed every day in grocery store butcher shops. Certainly, these people buy inspected meat, but once it's in their store they can do anything they like with it. Why hasn't the federal government cracked down on this kind of operation? Some of them are really bad.

"It's just not conceivable that their only concern is wholesome meat. I am convinced that this whole thing is a plot by the USDA to extend their power. I think they're putting the heat on the states to upgrade their meat programs, and then they're going to take them over, one by one. They've got nine states now, and I know that another 13 are on the fence.

"The USDA had the power under the Wholesome Meat Act to close down any plant anywhere. Yet they never closed down a single Pennsylvania plant. Why? Because our plants were clean. Right now the USDA is trying frantically to hire our unemployed meat inspectors, the ones they said were inadequately trained. Why? Because we have good inspectors.

"Our meat inspection program wasn't bad. We were making it better. We were, in fact, becoming a threat to the USDA.

"There are people in Washington who want to split up the USDA and spread its functions around to other agencies like the Food and Drug Administration and a new Consumer Protection Agency.

"Right now, I feel the USDA is trying to build its organization, its bureaucracy, by grabbing for all the responsibilities it can get. Then when the real battle shapes up, the department can trot out all the statistics of its involvement in regulatory and inspection activities. And if there are enough statistics, the USDA will be able to prove that it is indispensable. Gaining control of all meat inspection in the country would be a big step in that direction.

"The USDA is fighting for its life. I think that's the real story behind the meat inspection takeover."

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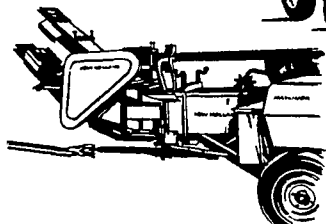
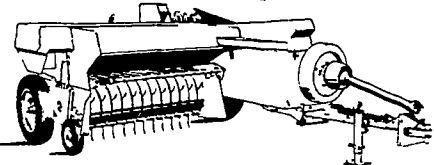
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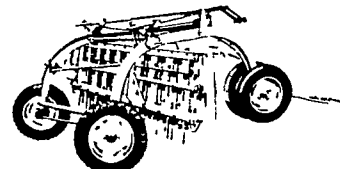
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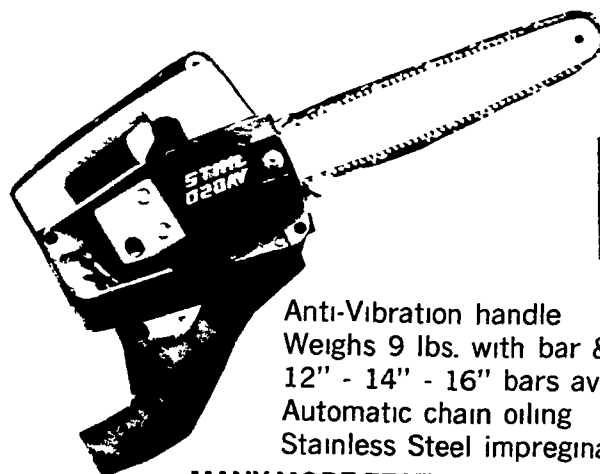
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FFA

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Mike Grube of Warwick High School FFA, taking reserve open class honors. Both showed crossbred hogs, Martin's selling to A&B Packing of Allentown for 31 cents a pound.

Grube also had both the reserve crossbred animals. His Duroc sold to Garden Spot for 31 cents a pound and his cross to A&B Packing for 31½ cents.

Robert Gruber, of Elizabethtown High School FFA, was a double winner, showing both the champion Duroc and Champion Berkshire.

Gruber's Duroc brought 31 cents a pound from Penn Packing while his champion Berkshire sold for 30 cents to Hershey Abattoirs.

Wes Gruber, Elizabethtown FFA, had the reserve champion Berkshire which sold to A&B Packing for 30 cents a pound.

The Spotted Poland China champion was shown by Russel Kline of Ephrata High School, FFA, and sold to Garden Spot Meats for 30½ cents a pound.

Richard Kauffman, Manheim Central FFA, had the Champion Chester White which was purchased by Kunzler for 30½ cents.

The Landrace champion was shown by Nelson Weaver, Ephrata FFA, with Tom Martin, Garden Spot FFA, showing the reserve.

Both the Landrace champions sold for 30 cents a pound with Weaver's going to Penn Packing and Martin's to Garden Spot Meats.