

Lancaster Farming

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Lancaster Farming Photo

Congressman Edwin D. Eshelman, left, toured half-a-dozen Lancaster County farms on Thursday to discuss farm issues. He's shown here with Donald Hershey, Manheim R2, president of the Lancaster County Farmers Association.

Eshelman Visits County Farmers

Congressman Edwin D. Eshelman toured half-a-dozen Lancaster County farms on Thursday to discuss the goings-on in Washington with area farmers. A group had gathered at each place he visited, and he met with about 150 farmers in all.

One of the first questions he was asked at the Donald Hershey farm in Manheim, was whether or not he could do anything about soaring feed prices. "I've been hearing the most about feed prices," he said. "And I'm going to kinda throw it back at you. You didn't want price controls."

Eshelman said he, too, did not favor price controls on farm commodities, but, he warned,

there may be a price to pay for the exemption.

He suggested that selective price controls might be a more practical path to travel with farm products.

He also told the farmers that the national government is not going to step into the problem of property taxes. He noted that the courts could declare the property tax unconstitutional. If this happens, income taxes and sales taxes would probably increase, he said.

Eshelman and his wife were escorted on the farm tour by Mr. and Mrs. Ivan Yost of Christiana R1.

Markets Rise, Costs Up, Too

Farmers right now in this area are getting top dollar for their milk, beef cattle, hogs, chickens and eggs. Prices for all these commodities are up well over last year. Beef cattle are selling at record highs. Eggs have virtually doubled since just this summer. Yet, very few farmers have been seen dancing in the fields, and for good reason.

While prices paid to farmers have been taking an escalator ride upwards, input costs - especially feed - have been on an express elevator to the roof. Last week a LANCASTER FARMING report discussed the soaring feed costs and the reasons behind them. This week we take a look at the stronger prices farmers are getting for animal products, and the extent to which these increases are reduced or wiped out by higher input costs.

EGGS

Eggman are getting a Christmas present this year - the highest egg price in about two years. Friday's market for large white eggs was quoted at 56c a dozen, which compares with 29c in June.

Normally, egg producers feel they can live comfortably with an egg market of 40 to 45c per dozen, which means that 56c could be considered an extremely good market. It must be remembered, though, that many producers were selling at or below cost for the past two years. Any unusual profits now will only help to make up for some of the losses suffered during a long, hard depressed period.

That 56c price loses some of its impressiveness, too, when considered in the light of higher feed costs. According to one local eggman, the feed cost for producing a dozen eggs has risen

anywhere from 4c to 6c in the past few months. Today's 56c market then, is only equivalent to a 50c market at last year's feed prices. Increases in other inputs (labor, fuel, etc) would add even more to the cost of production.

In the event, egg producers seem to be the only people with something to crow about, because their increased income has raced ahead even faster than rising feed costs.

The increases are seen as having little or nothing to do with feed cost increases. It's due instead to a smaller laying flock, and better demand. The decline

in the number of layers was brought about in large part by the destruction of millions of birds in California, victims of exotic Newcastle disease.

Also, slightly more birds are laying slightly fewer eggs. One expert pointed out that a lot of the nation's laying flock consists of old birds which will be moved into the meat markets as soon as the traditional Christmas market slows down.

MILK

"The cost of milk production has gone up faster than the price I get for milk," we were told by

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End to Cholera Embargo Seen

"If we find no more evidence of cholera infection, breeder and feeder hogs will be released for movement within the state of Pennsylvania, except for the two quarantined areas," Dr. Homer Forney said on Thursday night. Forney is chief of the miscellaneous diseases section of the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture's Bureau of Animal Industries.

Forney said his department is now conducting veterinary investigations on all feeder and breeder swine in the quarantined areas of Montgomery, Cumberland and part of Bucks Counties. These investigations could be completed by December 23 or shortly thereafter, and if no further incidents of cholera are found, restrictions on hog movement within the state of Pennsylvania would then be

lifted. Forney emphasized, however, that if any infection were found it would completely change the picture.

The Department of Agriculture also confirmed on Thursday that it had canceled all hog competition at the 1973 Pennsylvania Farm Show. Industry men both locally and around the state expressed their disappointment at the action, but were virtually unanimous in supporting it.

The current hog cholera situation began on December 8 when cholera was discovered in a Montgomery County herd of swine. The state Department of Agriculture declared a complete halt to all hog movements. This ban was partially lifted on December 18 when it was announced that market hogs could be moved, but only to slaughter points.

Sealtest Dairy Releases Independent Producers

Sealtest Dairies in Philadelphia announced this week that it was ceasing to buy milk from independent producers in this area. In a December 14 letter to producers, Sealtest urged them to join cooperatives because that's where the company would be buying all its milk from now on.

A Sealtest spokesman emphasized that his company was definitely not going out of the milk business. They're simply changing their buying methods.

He had no idea how many independent producers were affected in the LANCASTER FARMING readership area, but a good many farmers here will be affected.

Most observers feel that the move by Sealtest will have little economic effect on dairymen who had been selling to Sealtest. As an official of one producers cooperative said, "Any of these

farmers who want to join a coop can get in. There are still a few firms buying from independent producer, and if a farmer decides he doesn't want to join a coop, he's still going to sell his milk. Actually, Sealtest couldn't have picked a better time to cut loose from the independents. We're in the middle of a very strong milk market."

Farm Calendar

Monday, December 25

Christmas Day.

Thursday, December 28

11 a.m. - 4-H Tobacco and Corn Exhibits entered, Farm and Home Center.

1:30 p.m. - 4-H Tobacco and Corn Show, Farm and Home Center.

Lancaster County Swine Producers board of directors meeting, Farm and Home Center.



Lancaster Farming Photo

A new slate of officers to represent the Lancaster County Red Rose FFA Chapter were selected recently at a meeting in New Holland. Chosen as 1973 officers were: front row, left to right, Don Miller, Pequea Valley FFA Chapter, treasurer; Parke Hess, Manor FFA Chapter, secretary; Richard Hess, Lampeter-Strasburg

Chapter, president, and Ray Martin, Grassland Chapter, vice-president. Back row, Robert Gruber, Elizabethtown Chapter, sentinel; Melvin Weiler, Cloister Chapter, reporter; Louis Roether, Brownstown Vo-Tech Chapter, chaplain, and Thomas Stottlemeyer, Solanco Chapter, corresponding secretary.