

Cattlemen Optimistic

(Continued From Page 1) U.S. and one percent fewer There are six percent fewer cattle on feed in the year, Moore observed. He

said, though, that this figure distorts the picture a little bit. "There are tremendous numbers of cattle on range in the Midwest. Some of these animals have been out there for four or five years. They can be brought into the feedlots at any time for finishing, but they won't stay there very long."

To back up his point, Moore cited USDA figures which show lightweight cattle numbers on feed way down and heavyweight numbers up. The number of cattle under 500 pounds on feed is down 22 percent. Heavyweights, 1100 pounds and over, are up a whopping 55 percent from the year before.

Recapping 1973 for the assembled farmers, Moore said that it was the best year ever for agriculture. Farm income was up 30 percent from 1972, which was also a good year. There was a strong general economy, with consumer incomes up some 8 percent. Grain exports were up 30 percent in volume but 60 percent in value. Farm equipment was sold out. In general, while costs were up, increased returns more than made up for the added cost burden.

Grain supplies for this year should be adequate, Moore feels. While he doesn't see prices going up too much, he doesn't see them coming down, either. "If everything falls in place," he said, "we might see some lower grain prices in 1975." Live cattle prices will be great compared to recent years, Moore concluded, but profits will hinge mainly on feed costs.

Another Penn State specialist, James H. Eakin, extension agronomist, cautioned cattle feeders

switching acreage from corn to soybeans.

"If your cattle numbers are in balance with your current feed program, stick with your present crops of corn and alfalfa," said Eakin. "If you have to cut part of this acreage to grow soybeans, you're making a mistake."

"If, on the other hand, you can rent some good land to grow soybeans for feed supplements, you should pay attention as to how to grow soybeans. This can make the difference between 25 and 70 bushels an acre," he said. He said on a typical Lancaster County farm, no fertilizer is needed for soybeans. He warned that on acid soils soybeans should not even be attempted.

Roger Groul, agricultural engineer, told feeders to start thinking about waste disposal as more pollution laws are enacted.

He said the most economical way to get rid of manure effectively is to spread it on fields at such time and in such way as to minimize any run-off.

He said the simpler the process of handling animal wastes the better. Costly processes in many cases, he noted, just create more problems.

Dr. Lester Burdette livestock extension specialist, stressed the need for feed additives and proper amounts of protein for cattle. The younger, the lighter and the faster the rate of gain is expected the higher the percentage of protein is needed.

Another feature of the day's program was a discussion of silo gas by three area farmers who fell victim to the deadly farm hazard. Henry Hackman, Jay Nissley and Harold Sherk told the assembled cattlemen how they'd

become seriously ill from silo gas.

Penn State's Roger Groul, noted that the gas will affect different people different ways.

He said the problem is not an uncommon one but one that is often not realized until it has caused serious injury or death.

The gas, he noted, can drift from the bottom of a silo and float across the ground or floor into a livestock area killing any animals which receive heavy doses.

He noted liquid manure tanks have also caused a few deaths as the fermenting manure emits hydrogen sulfide.

The best way of preventing

illness from the gas, he noted, is to run the blowers in the silo for several minutes before entering.

He said the gas should be allowed to flow downward out the chute before entering. He also suggested to climb up the outside of the silo instead of inside it.

"But the most important combatant to the problem," he said, "is an awareness of the possible existence of the deadly gas."

He said the danger period is usually within the first month after the silo has been filled. Dry weather, he added, also increases the nitrate contents.

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