

Runoff Control

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Consumer prices for these items could shoot up as much as 10-15 percent. But for fed beef, the short-term effects on prices and supplies of beef would probably be nominal.

Side effects. Consumers wouldn't be the only ones to feel the pinch. If large numbers of producers dropped out of business, reduced business for feed, equipment, veterinarians, and other agricultural service firms could seriously affect the economies of some rural communities in livestock producing areas.

Over the longer run, however, the effect of runoff control guidelines on supplies are expected to be less dramatic. Those operators who remain in business will enlarge their operations and adopt cost-saving technologies. Production of livestock products will continue to shift increasingly to areas where production costs are lowest. Fed cattle operations, for example, could become more concentrated in the Plains States.

As for the consequences of runoff control guidelines on the separate livestock in-

dustries, here's what economists see in store:

DAIRY

Of the 305,000 dairies expected to be operating in 1976, an estimated 40 percent would have surface water runoff problems.

Experts figure the dairy industry would have to invest some \$300 million to comply with pollution control guidelines proposed by the EPA. Partly because of uncertainty about how to comply and whether any action taken now will meet future regulations, relatively few dairy farms have installed runoff control facilities.

Big three. To determine the impact of the guidelines on dairymen, milk supplies, and prices, the USDA's Economic Research Service (ERS) looked at three major producing regions—the North, Southeast, and Southwest. These regions produce around 80 percent of the Nation's milk and account for about 75 percent of the national dairy herd.

In the northern region, herds tend to be small, and cows are typically housed in stanchion barns with outside lots. Very few northern

dairies have special runoff collection facilities.

Dairy farms in the Southeast tend to be larger, and most feature open housing with exposed lots. Rainfall is heavy—50 to 65 inches per year—and dairymen use anywhere from 50 to 150 gallons of wash water per cow per day.

Large dairy farms also predominate in the Southwest. Most herds in this area are kept in open loose housing facilities with exposed lots. Large volumes of wash water are used, and in the area's northern reaches, farms are often located near streams and creekbeds—sites often chosen years earlier to facilitate drainage. Most existing runoff control facilities will not contain runoff from a major storm.

Up north. In the northern region, average investment in runoff control systems that meet EPA guidelines would cost \$2,799 for a 15-cow herd, or \$187 per cow. Larger dairy operations in this region face substantially lower per-cow investments. Investments per head to control runoff from 30-, 80-, and 150-cow dairies would average \$69, \$34, and \$25 respectively.

In the southeastern region, where producers typically use large volumes of wash water and rainfall is heavy, higher investments per cow are expected. Per cow investments would vary from \$44 on the 80-cow dairy to only \$27 on the 500-cow operation. Dairymen with 15 cows would face a steep \$193 per cow.

In the southwest region, per cow investments would range from \$237 on the 15-cow operation to only \$20 for 500-cow dairies.

The total investment required of the entire dairy industry would be borne by 40 percent of all dairy farms.

Many of these are small, less efficient operations that might easily buckle under with the added financial burden.

Of the farms expected to have to install runoff control facilities, an estimated 90 percent could comply with EPA guidelines by constructing diversion ditches, settling basins, and holding ponds. However, up to 10 percent of the farms with problems might have to make major adjustments or relocate buildings—steps that could cost so much that these producers might decide to stop dairying.

Therefore, experts concluded that establishment of pollution control guidelines would hasten the trend to fewer and larger farms.

Cow count. Also of much concern is what will happen to milk cow numbers if a significant number of farmers drop out of dairying. The industry is already operating at full capacity and if cows are slaughtered, herd-building will take a number of years.

Thus, for the short term, establishment of pollution control guidelines could affect overall production. Supplies of dairy products would be considerably smaller than if no runoff control guidelines were imposed. As a result, prices of milk, butter, and cheese would rise sharply.

But over the longer run, the overall impact of runoff control measures on supply is expected to be slight as dairy production shifts increasingly to least-cost producing regions and those dairymen who make the added investments and remain in business begin adopting lower-cost technologies.

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feedlots have runoff control problems.

Confirming to EPA guidelines would require these fed beef producers to invest about \$133 million.

To assess the impact of runoff control, economists

grouped the 18 States into two producing regions—east and west.

The eastern beef feeding States encompass the Corn Belt, Northern Plains, Lake States, and Northeast. The

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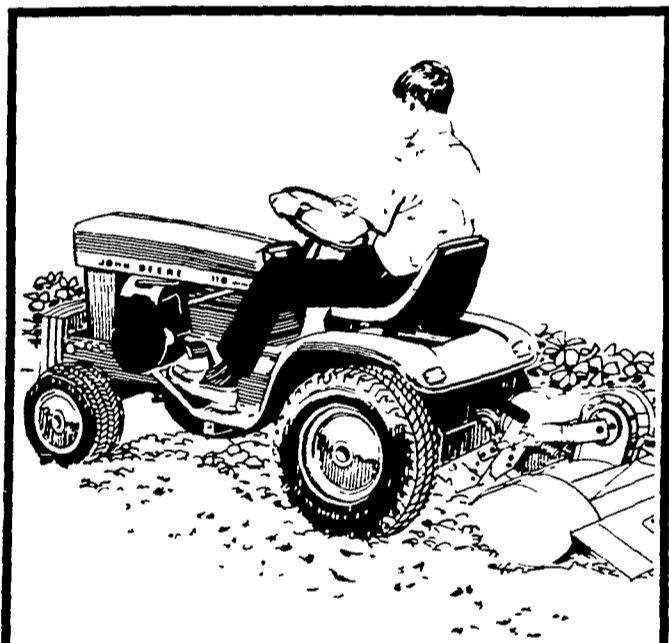
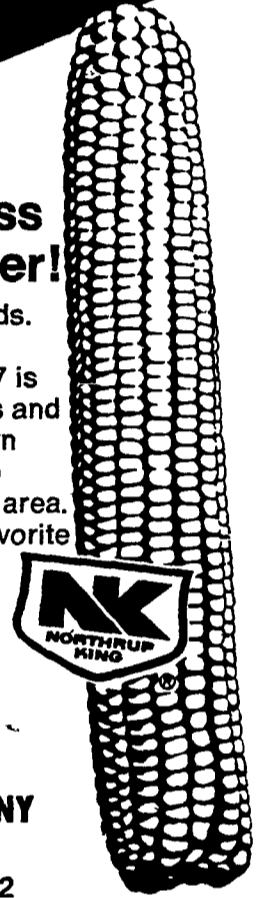
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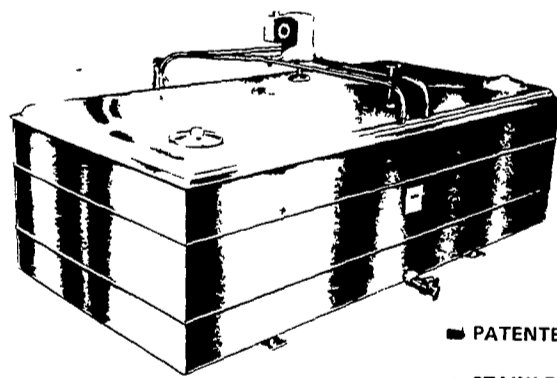
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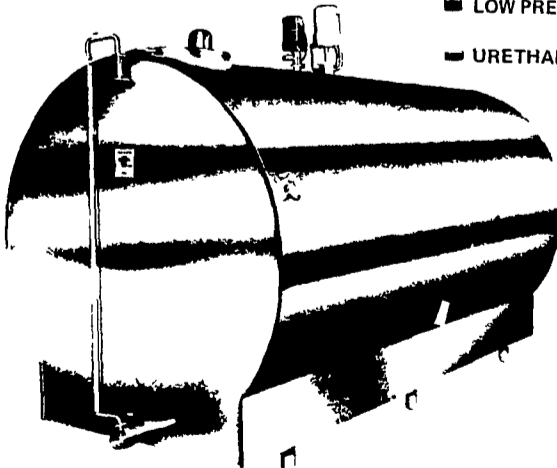
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