

# FARM TRENDS

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right now," Robinson said, "and it's going to be doing a lot of damage in the next few weeks. Alfalfa seems to be maturing faster than normal this year, and this could make the problem worse. Most weevil sprays call for a week or two between application and harvest. Killing the weevil could mean a farmer would have to let his hay become too mature at harvest."

Robinson said that if seven out of ten plants in a field are affected, then it's time for action. A farmer can spray if he's not planning to mow in the next ten days, or he can cut his crop right away and put it in the silo. The stubble should be sprayed after mowing,

Robinson commented.

Of special concern, he added, should be the alfalfa fields seeded last fall. These should not be cut in any case before the crop comes to the half-bloom stage.

## Minimum Wage Goes Up

Federal minimum wage regulations went into effect May 1 and increased the minimum for some 88,000 farm workers across the country from \$1.30 per hour to \$1.60. Actually, most local farms won't be affected by the new rate because they don't hire enough labor. Labor cost for bigger operators will go up again, to \$1.80 on January 1, 1975, to \$2.00 a year later, to \$2.20 the following year and to \$2.30 on January 1, 1978.

## Meat Prices Seen Heading Up

Livestock prices are expected to rise later this spring into early summer as meat production declines from the winter level, according to USDA figures. Retail meat prices will probably rise into summer, but should generally decline for the rest of 1974 as meat supplies increase and inflationary pressures subside. January-March retail beef and pork prices were probably at their highs for the year.

Per capita meat consumption this year is expected to rise from 1973's 176 pounds but will not reach the 189 pounds of 1972. Consumption during January-March was nearly the same as a year ago. Beef, veal, and lamb consumption ran about the same as January-March 1973 and pork consumption rose nearly 1 pound per person.

Cattle prices have stabilized in the low \$40's per 100 pounds after declining sharply from the January highs. Market disruptions due to precautions taken before, and in response to, the truck strike in February were largely responsible for the erratic price behavior early this year.

Lancaster Farming, Saturday, May 11, 1974—7

The deteriorating cattle market in February and March forced many cattle feeders into financial loss positions which discouraged orderly marketings of cattle for slaughter. Overfinished cattle have had a major price depressing effect in the past several weeks on both the live and retail markets.

Cattle slaughter this spring likely will decline some from the winter level, and prices are expected to rise to the mid \$40's by early summer. Then later in the summer and fall, more cattle will be coming to slaughter and cattle and beef prices will again decline. Much of the increase in slaughter will continue to be in cows and nonfed steers and heifers. Prospective larger imports of beef in the second half will also contribute to larger supplies.

If the fed cattle market rises this spring and summer as expected, and cattle feeders' losses are reduced, they will probably tend to bid up somewhat the market for cattle going into feedlots. Prices of these feeder cattle will decline seasonally later in the year and perhaps average in the low \$40's for the second half.

Hog prices early this year fell sharply, but are expected to strengthen this spring and summer as supplies trend seasonally lower. Summer peak prices could reach the high \$30's.

As of March 1 hog producers were sticking close to their earlier production plans for 1974. Farrowing intentions for March-May indicated no changes were planned. June-August farrowing intentions were down 2 percent.

Sheep and lamb slaughter is continuing lower this year. Lamb prices have risen this spring but are expected to be seasonally lower this summer and fall.

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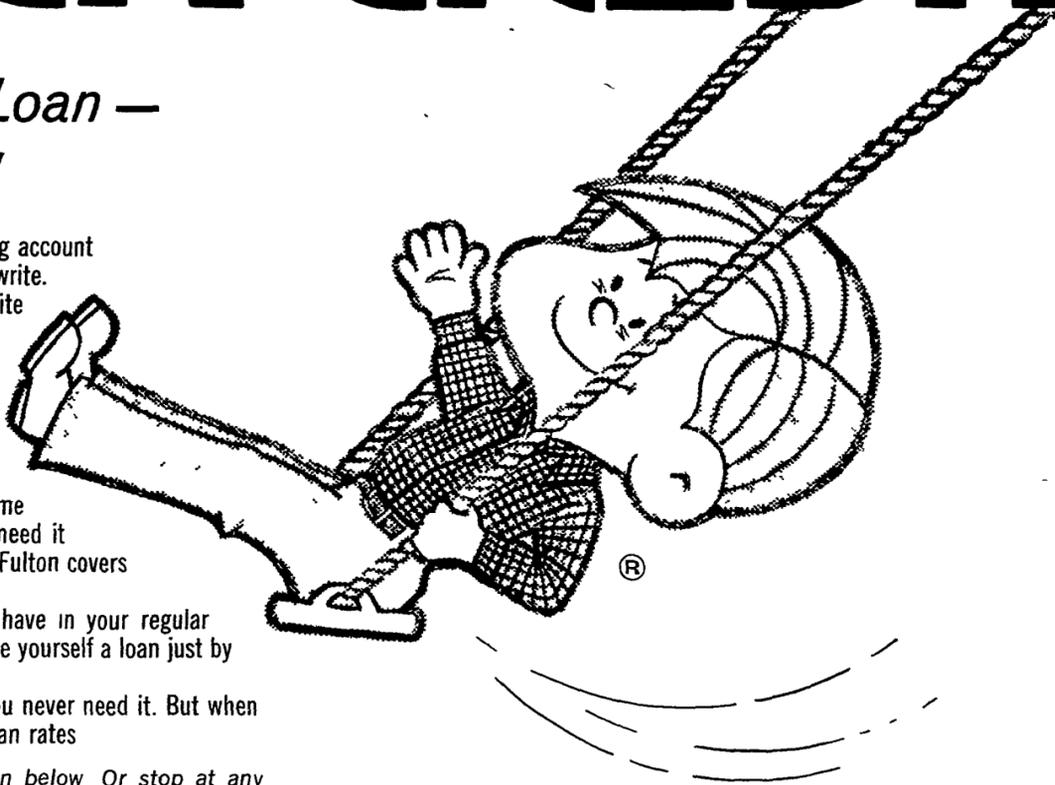
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