

Cattle market future looks promising

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cash levels to make it profitable," he stated.

The economist explained that many changes are in evidence for the industry with the greatest emphasis now being placed on the "adolescent beef" which experiences no grading.

Consumer buying will also be a factor, as last year 42

percent of the beef purchased was in the form of hamburger or processed meat.

"No one is sure if the consumer will be willing to pay more this year," he stated.

"If the hamburger supply drops there is likely to be a price increase and who knows if the consumer's confidence will stay with beef."

Also the new grading

system for beef, which will go into effect after Feb. 23, is likely to have some effect on the industry.

Moore explained that the outlook surveys would be easier to pinpoint if economists knew how long farmers would be holding their grain and how much Russia would buy.

"The grain situation is a guessing game," he noted, "which makes the outlook somewhat more difficult." The rate of inflation (usually

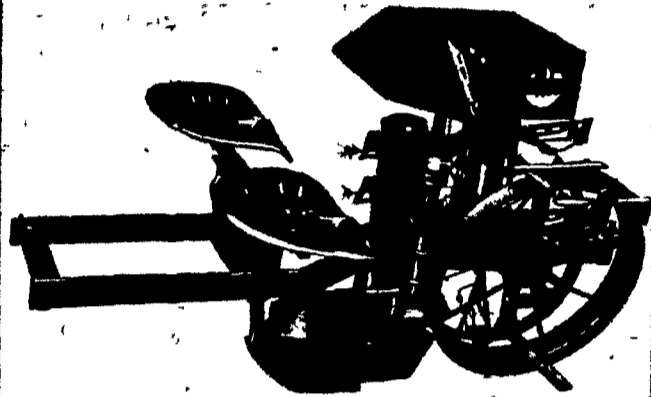
unpredictable) also has an effect on the market situation.

While many variables are still lurking on the horizon, the cattle industry, on an overall view, looks promising but without the large profits realized by some feeders last year. According to the Penn State economist, the bicentennial year may not be as favorable for cattle feeders but an improvement is in sight for the cow-calf operators.



Dr. Les Burdette and Lou Moore, extension specialists from Penn State, look over a program from the annual Cattle Feeder's Day held in Lancaster. Both served as speakers for the event.

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vinced that direct markets are doing a better job," McCoy stated. "After the big defaults by packing outfits last year, people are more interested in taking their livestock through commission firms, this has helped marketing."

McCoy also noted that the high sell off of cows by culling had been widespread last year adding to the numbers coming to the auction. "It just wasn't profitable last year to keep a cow that wasn't producing good," he explained, "a lot of culling took place and sent numbers to the stockyards."

The cattle situation of the bicentennial year may seem difficult however, according to the stockyards president. "With an election year upcoming, the cattle

situation may not be too good."

"The consumers keep looking at the price of food and if it doesn't come down, they look toward the candidates and government to reduce prices" McCoy stated. The auction official explained that history substantiated the point that election years were never good for cattle numbers.

McCoy explained that producers must remain current in their offerings if the price is to stay relatively good. If the producers become "bullheaded" and hold their cattle it is going to hurt the market and prices.

While there are many variables still to be considered including imports and grain prices, the cattle market for the coming year may very well see a narrowing of prices which stays close to the \$40 per hundredweight mark.

Area tobacco

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what was received by most growers last year.

Farmers who have sorted their tobacco are likely to do a little better in prices than those who are offering the crop with good and bad leaved mixed, Mann said. The reason for wanting the tobacco separated is because the better quality variety is useful, while the lower quality leaves aren't considered to have much value. Although the Mann

spokesman considered the crop to be not quite as good as last year's, some other company officials will go further than that and say the quality just isn't there. A less than ideal growing season, unfavorable cutting conditions on some farms and delayed schedules in stripping all contributed to the lack in quality.

Over-all, however, if any guess can be made - farmers may expect a price within the 56 to 58 cent range, reports indicate.

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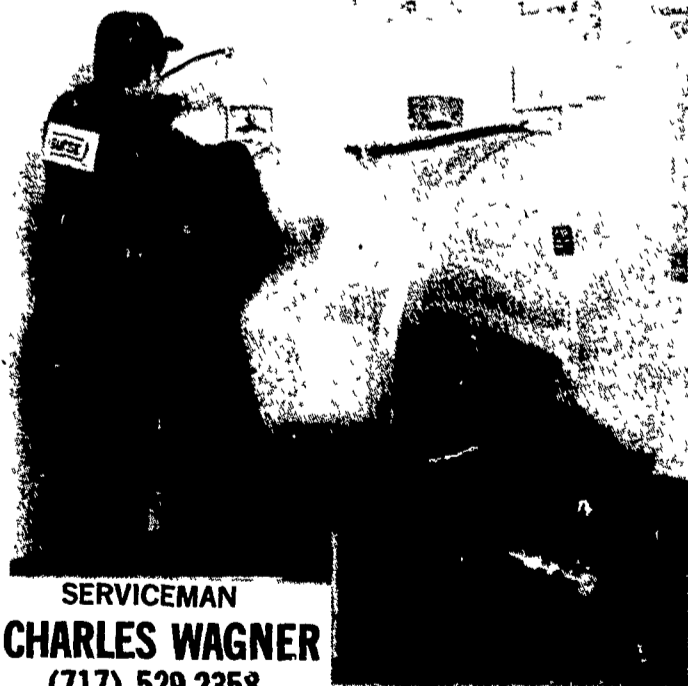
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