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Lamb crop shows decrease, prices high

By MELISSA PIPER

COCHRANVILLE — The week before Easter traditionally sees area livestock markets filled to capacity with the annual offering of slaughter lambs. Again this year, the lambs were sent to auction but the decreased number of young animals caused amazingly high prices.

Early trading in the week revealed that the average per pound for slaughter lambs was about 57 cents. Some of the highest prices were paid in southcentral Pa. auctions with quotations jumping to 81 cents with a few at 1.00 per pound.

In the western parts of the Commonwealth, the prices ranged from 58-76 cents with a few jumps closer to 1.00 per pound. And in the immediate marketing facilities, prices crept toward the average figure and leveled off around 50 cents per pound.

The inflated market prices surprised some buyers but many producers had been predicting the increase as fewer animals were produced this year.

With a four percent decrease in animal production noted in the state and a national decrease of nine percent, the summer market prices will probably stay high at least until September, according to Ben Morgan, extension specialist from Penn State.

During a sheep shearing clinic held here on Tuesday, Morgan explained that the marketing future looks good for the sheep producers with a leveling off of about 50 cents per pound.

A number of reasons point toward the decrease in sheep production both on a state and national level with the most prominent being the age-old stigma of unpopularity that sheep seem to carry with them.

"There just seems to be more glamour in raising cattle than sheep," explained Morgan. "How many times do you hear a producer brag about his flock of sheep when he can talk about his cattle?"

Morgan noted that although a producer can raise about six ewes for comparatively the same costs amount as one beef cow, many people do not try making money on sheep.

"People just don't seem as concerned

[Continued on Page 13]

In this issue

Farm Calendar	10
Farm Commentaries	10
Life on the farm	18
Classifieds	25
Country Corner	42
Homestead Notes	42
Womens' Calendar	44
Womens' feature	45
Home on the Range	49
Bicentennial farms	54, 64
Dairy talks	65, 67, 75
Lebanon DHIA	78
FFA land judging	80
Thoughts in Passing	82
Egg marketing meet	88
Berks dairy meeting	91
Public Sales Register	93
Sale Reports	102



Lititz Record Express Photo

The Pietà - The Virgin Mary mourning over the dead body of Christ.

Mushroom industry hurt

By DIETER KRIEG

KENNETT SQUARE — Imported mushrooms are squeezing many Pennsylvania mushroom farmers right out of business, says Tim King, executive director

of the American Mushroom Institute (AMI).

Last Monday a delegation of Pennsylvania mushroom growers and a few from other states went to Washington, D.C. to present

their case to Congress and the President. They're hopeful of a favorable response. King regards congressional reaction up to this point to at least have

[Continued on Page 13]

Hendrik Wentink honored

Hendrik Wentink, assistant to the president of Pennfield Corp., Lancaster, has been selected as the Maryland egg industry's "Friend of the Year" for 1976.

The "Friend of the Year" award is presented annually by the Maryland council to an individual in the egg industry, or allied group, whose activities have made outstanding contributions to the industry.

Recipients are selected on the basis of personal contributions of time and effort to public programs and activities designed to

improve the economic welfare of the nation's egg industry.

Wentink is the present chairman of the National Commission on Egg Nutrition; immediate past president of the Northeast Poultry Producers Council, secretary of the Pennsylvania Poultry Federation, a member of the marketing council of the American Feed Manufacturers Association, and a U. S. delegate on the Sub-Committee on Health and Nutrition of the International Egg Commission.

[Continued on Page 12]

Fruit damage considerable in southern areas

By DIETER KRIEG

LITITZ — Orchards in southern portions of the state took a beating earlier this week when temperatures dropped into the teens. Northern fruit growers weren't struck quite so hard since their trees weren't advanced as far.

Dean Asquith, professor of entomology at Penn State's Biglerville Fruit Research Laboratory, estimates that 40 per cent of the plum and cherry trees in the area were damaged to some degree. He's quick to add, however, that the degree of damage ranges from zero to almost total, depending on the variety of the fruit and location of the trees.

The professor told Lancaster Farming in a telephone interview on Thursday that the higher locations got off relatively easy with no damage of buds evident. Lower lying areas were struck hard as temperatures dropped to 24 degrees at the station and Asquith guesses it was five to six degrees colder than that in some spots. He observed that cherries and plums were hit the hardest, adding that they had been damaged earlier in the year as well. "Injuries in flatlands and hollows is considerable — I'd say 50 to 60 per cent," he said.

Questioned further, Asquith remarked: "We're enjoying the sunshine . . . but we wish things weren't quite so early." The remark was echoed by others interviewed later. He claimed that orchards in the area have advanced to the point where bees will soon have to be brought in and some early season apple blossoms are beginning to open.

"I hope we'll get through the full moon in May," the professor continued, "if we do I think we're off and running. There'll be critical days ahead for the next three to four weeks . . . other than that I think the fruit crop will be in good shape."

Terry Bortz, from the Schuylkill County Extension Service, says the fruit crop in his vicinity "looks real good." Temperatures dropped down to 19 degrees last Monday, but the blossoms weren't advanced far enough to be killed. "We found very little damage," the agricultural agent announced. "But we're worried because things are two to four weeks ahead of schedule — apples are pushing too," he continued. "The pink on the bud is showing on some varieties," he said.

Schuylkill County fruit growers include very few cherry trees in their orchards, but plums and peaches are abundant. Some plum trees were damaged, Bortz reported, but in spite of that he expects a fine crop. "We're really surprised that things look so good, if we make it through the Spring now without frost we'll have lots of picking to do," he concluded.

Robert Hodge, who owns a 250-acre cherry, plum, peach and apple orchard near Marshalltown in Chester County, says he's noticed some bud kill on his trees but he wouldn't be able to assess the damage for several weeks yet. His wife explained that the story will be told in early June when the phenomenon known as "Spring drop" occurs.

Only the good and viable blossoms will

[Continued on Page 17]