

LIFE on the farm



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I can remember hunting more than just Easter eggs during this time of year, and in comparison, finding the colored objects and chocolate bunnies was a breeze. They were usually just hidden on the lawn, or if the weather wasn't favorable, then within the perimeter of the house.

Cows don't play games according to such simple rules, especially when the "hide-and-go-seek playground" consists of more than 100 acres and some of it is either woods, swamp, or just a plain patch of briars and bushes.

A cow was sometimes hard to find as she stood or lay completely motionless and camouflaged in a thicket. Some were obviously trickier at the game than others as they matched wits with us for hours. Sometimes we'd spot the animal - often only to lose her again a time or two because of obstructions. Also, anyone who has ever been in a thicket looking for a cow knows that they glide through, under, over, and around those growths like a weasel crossed with a bulldozer. People,

however, get slapped in the face by branches, trip over vines, have a boot stuck eight inches deep in mud, are punctured by thorns, and get lost. They have to climb, stoop, crawl, tip-toe, jump, and roll while cows just stick their noses in the chosen direction and wedge themselves forward.

If finding a cow was a tough assignment, an even more difficult task was finding the calf of the sneaky bovine who came into the barn trying to make us believe she hadn't calved yet while leaving the little one in some neat nest somewhere. Cows rarely pull that trick without leaving instructions for the calf to be perfectly still unless practically stepped upon. In that event it's supposed to run like a jackrabbit.

I can remember combing square yard after square yard of pasture in search of a calf. Even though they were black and white, it was amazing how they could blend in with their surroundings, and surprising how long it would take us sometimes to find them.

Commentary

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"They're not telling us anything we don't know," was a common complaint.

I'd have to agree. Not much was said which farmers haven't heard before. But that wasn't the whole purpose. Dairy men were to make the trip to Washington to show "the public" they care about what is going on. The ears on which the information was really supposed to fall belonged to newsmen and consumers. Whether that happened or not is debatable.

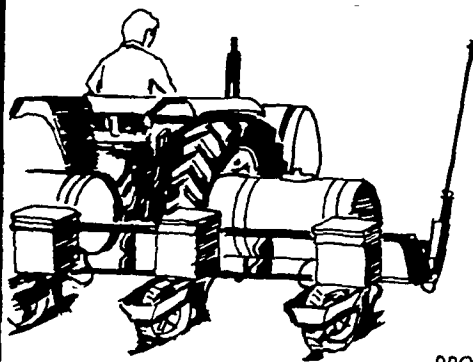
Challenging farmers to take the initiative in taking the farm story to consumers, Kastenmeier addressed himself primarily to dairymen - not consumers. It was a valid point, and

one I have made myself on this page from time to time. I couldn't agree more. But that should not lessen the responsibilities of such a task for cooperatives, legislators, reporters, columnists, and farm groups.

A number of reporters were present at the symposium. It is not known how many representatives from consumer organizations might have been present. Also unknown is how effective the entire affair might have been. It is not beyond doubt that a more effective method might have been arranged.

One Lancaster County dairyman probably summed it up best when he said: "I hope they print what they heard, and I hope consumers will read it and not forget it."

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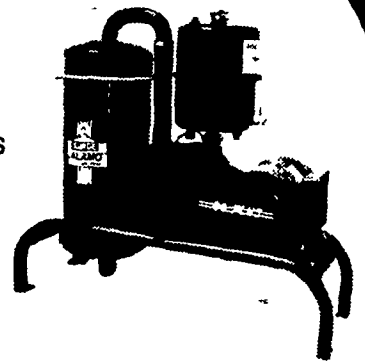
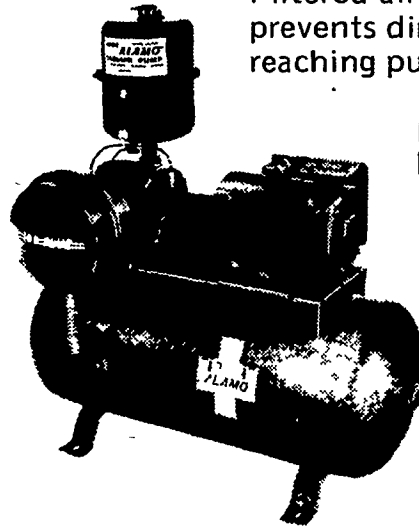
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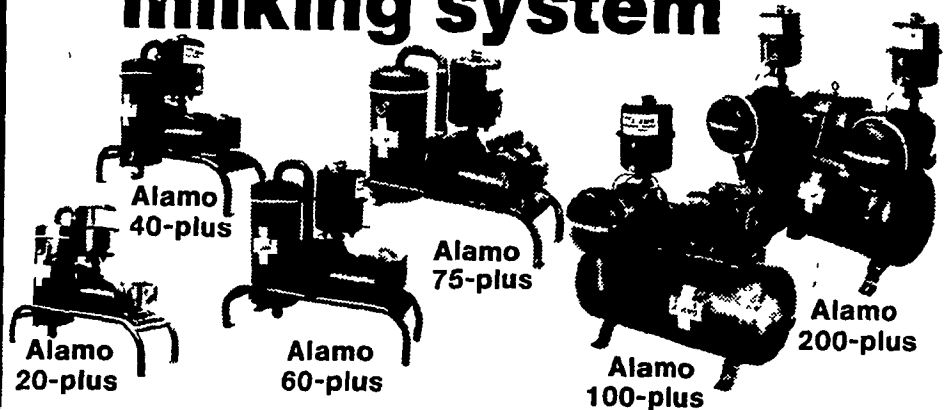
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