

National hay crop way short, Pennsylvania hay abundant

By DIETER KRIEG
LITITZ, Pa. - The United States Department of Agriculture announced recently that the U.S. hay crop is down by 12 per cent from a year ago. In fact, hay on hand as of this month is the lowest since 1964.

But the picture for Pennsylvania is considerably brighter. Statewide, hay production was down slightly from a year ago. The eastern half of the state reportedly had an abundance of hay.

Paul Z. Martin, who deals with hay and straw each week in Leola, told Lan-

caster Farming this week that he's noticing buyers at his auction this Fall that he has never seen before. They're coming from as far away as Virginia and southern Maryland, where drought was a problem this Summer. "Buyers from Virginia - it's very unusual to see 'em here," Martin commented.

"There's hay around the eastern part of Pennsylvania," Martin continued, "and also in the Finger Lakes region of New York State."

Martin guessed that there was more hay available in

this area than in most other years, but a lot of had gotten wet, leaving top quality hay as a somewhat scarce item. He noted that his top load of alfalfa on Wednesday commanded a price of \$103 per ton. The top load of straw fetched \$83 per ton, a number of loads went for as high as \$79.

The Lancaster Countian considered the prices as "very high," especially in view of the fact that Wednesday's sale was held under wet conditions, and some loads had come in practically soaked due to not being covered during the

downpour. "We had a buying crowd today," Martin said.

He estimates that at least 15 per cent of this year's Pennsylvania hay crop got wet.

Charles Hammond, assistant statistician at the Pennsylvania Crop Reporting Service, told Lancaster Farming that the Keystone State's hay crop as of Oct. 1 was rated at 4.3 million tons. That compares with just under 4.4 million tons last year. The Harrisburg official noted in his remarks that this figure is for all hay. The alfalfa harvest is actually up

slightly from the year before. He described the first cuttings as "average" in quality while successive cuttings rated somewhat better than that. "There's a pretty good demand for Pennsylvania hay," the statistician concluded.

Nationally, the U.S. hay yield per acre is seen as averaging 1.96 tons, which is down from 2.15 tons per acre last year and the lowest since 1966.

Paul Hively, a York County farmer who deals in hay in his area, echoed many of Martin's comments. He said his business was steady

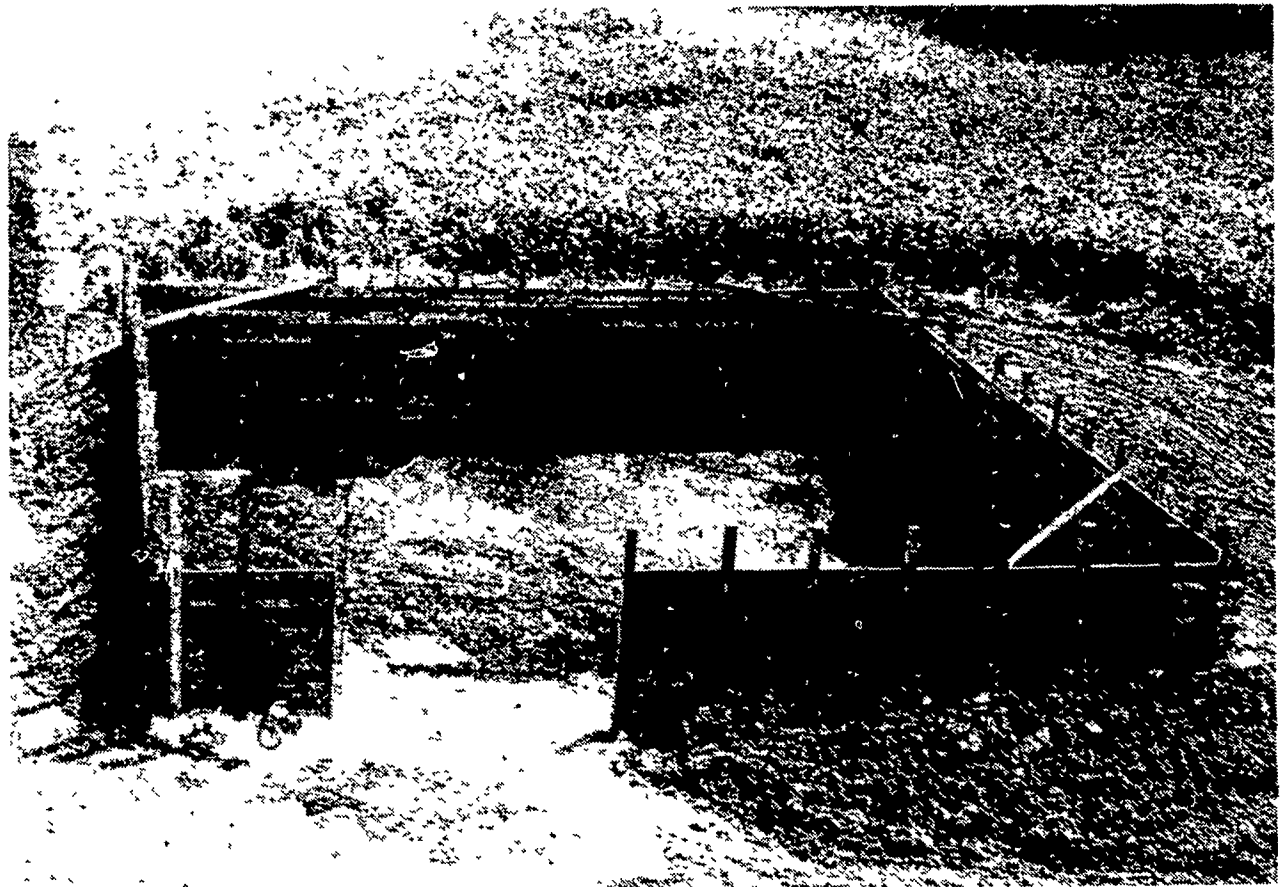
but that a lot of hay he's looking at is "not near first class." He buys most all of his hay in York County and sells in Lancaster County.

Ira Zartman from northern Lancaster County buys quite a bit of hay from southern New York State. He reports abundant supplies in that area as well as throughout eastern Pennsylvania. "But there's not much good hay - there's a lot of poor hay around," he concluded.



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