

# Beef management discussed at Hinkletown

By DIETER KRIEG

HINKLETOWN, Pa. - "If you're in the business of selling feed, I can't see why you can't do it with heifers or steers," Amos Weaver told a group of 50 farmers here recently during an adult education program sponsored by the Hinkletown Alternative School.

Weaver was one of three panelists invited to take part in the presentation. The others were Abe Dieffenbach of New Holland Sales Stables and Bill McCoy, president of Lancaster Stock Yards.

A cattle feeder from the Stevens area, Weaver specializes in fattening heifers, rather than steers. "The spread between heifers and steers should be seven to eight cents," he told the group, suggesting that when "the spread is 10 cents a pound, you really should consider heifers." He opinionized that last year the advantages of the feeder cattle situation strongly favored heifers and presented figures on the blackboard to prove it.

"I marketed 114 head this Summer," Weaver began while picking up a piece of chalk. The cattle averaged 402 pounds per head when he brought them to his farm and cost him \$24.96 cents per hundredweight. After feeding them for 310 days, they had an average market weight of 998 pounds. He sold them for an average of \$37.21 per hundredweight. The average gain per day (allowing for shrinkage coming and going) was 2.1 pounds. Total weight put on per animal was 596 pounds.

The cattleman from Stevens has been feeding heifers for five years and is convinced that they are giving him a more profitable rate of return than steers would. He pointed out, however, that the advantage of feeding heifers isn't always as pronounced as it was last year. McCoy agreed.

The primary advantages Weaver sees in feeding heifers is the price spread itself - especially when it comes close to 10 cents per pound; and that heifers can be sold for "a lot less capital investment per head fed."

But it isn't all glory and profit in the heifer feedlot.

There are disadvantages too.

The buyer can come up with caiving heifers. To avoid this predicament, Weaver suggests that the farmer buy his feeders at relatively light weights. The maximum weight suggestions he had to offer are: Angus, 450 pounds; Herefords, 500 pounds; and Charolais, 550 pounds.

Another problem which is likely to be encountered is heifers coming into heat. Again, the situation can be taken care of "very nicely" by feeding special drugs which suppress heat. The product Weaver uses also contains a growth stimulant, and at a cost of just one cent per day per head, he considers it well worth it. There is a 48-hour withdrawal period prior to marketing, he cautioned.

The third disadvantage of feeding heifers is sucking, which might be taken care of with anti-sucking muzzles, or by shipping the culprit to market early.

"The larger your bunch in one lot, the bigger your problems," Weaver concluded. "There are three things to remember in this business:

1. "Buy 'em light."
2. "Buy 'em good - the quality to buy in heifers is a lot more important than the quality you buy in steers."
3. Grinning broadly, he offered his third tip, knowing that not everyone in the room would agree - "buy Charolais."

Dieffenbach, in his comments, advised the farmers to keep a steady eye on their management practices and to not aim for either extreme on the market weight scale. He also recommended that cattlemen keep abreast of the futures market, saying that "it probably has a bigger bearing on the live market than we know sometimes." Asking for a show of hands on how many in the group use the futures markets in their planning, only three responded affirmatively.

In continuing his talk, Dieffenbach praised the marketing potentials of Lancaster County, noting specifically that livestock in this area could be marketed on any day of the week except certain holidays. This should offer farmers a greater opportunity to market their cattle at optimum times.

McCoy started his remarks in reference to Weaver's heifer feeding program, saying that last year there existed an "extremely favorable price spread. He also noted that heifers which are already with calf when purchased may be injected with steroids. "The problem with heifers is going too far," he continued, "when they're ready for market, they've got to go."

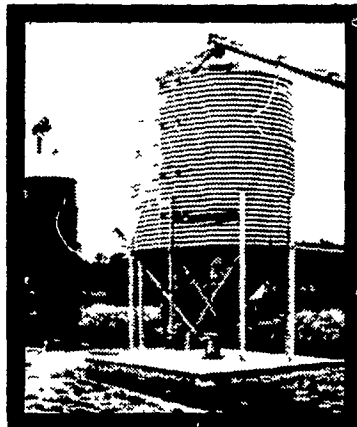
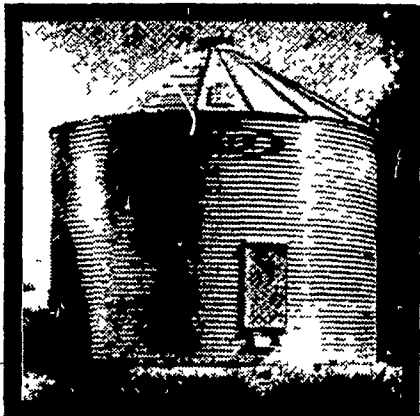
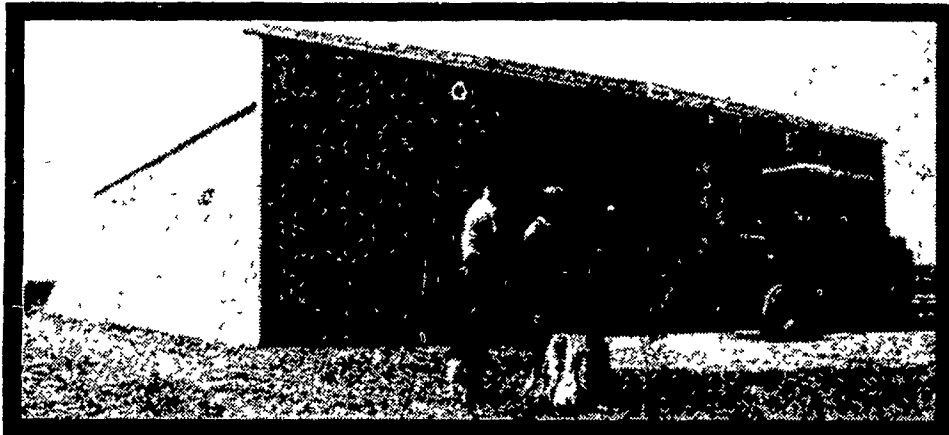
The Stockyard president explained that the spread in prices between steers and heifers exists because of a lack of



Cattlemen are depending more and more on forages.

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