

Shelhamer eases

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had been temporarily lost because of processing plants shut down due to the energy crunch. This was accomplished, said Shelhamer, by contacting processors whose primary fuel was oil rather than natural gas.

"In several cases," Shelhamer noted, "farmers were given the opportunity to move their product to short-term alternate buyers. Cooperation at all points was excellent."

Shelhamer said that milk designated for school use would still be well within coded dates if the schools reopened "relatively soon." Should those markets be lost to farmers, he observed, oil-using processors would probably still accept the milk for manufacturing purposes.

A survey of food stores, statewide, revealed that supplies are in "fine condition and reasonable supply," Shelhamer said. He indicated that in some areas of the state, hay supplies were down to a seven day figure but that the shortage was mainly confined to the northwest region where a wet Spring curtailed the hay harvest last year.

He said hay was "in generally good" supply in most of the remainder of Pennsylvania. Shelhamer urged all farmers to keep accurate records of losses of product, materials, and livestock as "a good step to take in these circumstances."

There has been no indication, as yet, of possible federal indemnities at a later date, but Shelhamer urged record-keeping as a "solid precautionary measure."

Shelhamer also mentioned that a "sizeable portion of the peach crop, especially the Jersey variety," would be adversely affected by the freeze and that a shortage could be expected by consumers. "Fifteen degrees Fahrenheit is the danger zone for the Jersey variety," he said, "and of course we have gone far beyond that point."

He stated that egg supplies in Pennsylvania would be hurt as "they always are by substained periods of cold" and that frostbite to animals could minimize supplies of milk, although he foresaw no drastic shortage at this time.

Another area of possible loss cited by the Columbia County farmer concerned apiaries where drifting snows could cause considerable losses. In addition to the obvious cutback in supplies of honey, Shelhamer said a more serious potential problem

existed: "Fewer bees mean less pollination in the seed-propagating process and this, in turn, may add up to crop loss in vital areas like hay and fruit."

Shelhamer said his Bureau of Weights and Measures had been calibrating oil trucks but would postpone such action for now so that fleets could be utilized to full effectiveness by dealers. He asked any farmer who had problems with fuel to contact the Department of Agriculture which would turn such requests over to the Governor's Energy Resource people immediately. He emphasized that fuel problems could include such matters as frozen water supply pipes.

"In summation,"

Shelhamer said, "we're talking long range about shortages in many crop areas come harvest time, about the need for alternative energy sources for food processors as already urged by the Public Utilities Commission (PUC) and about some kind of help for those farmers hardest hit."

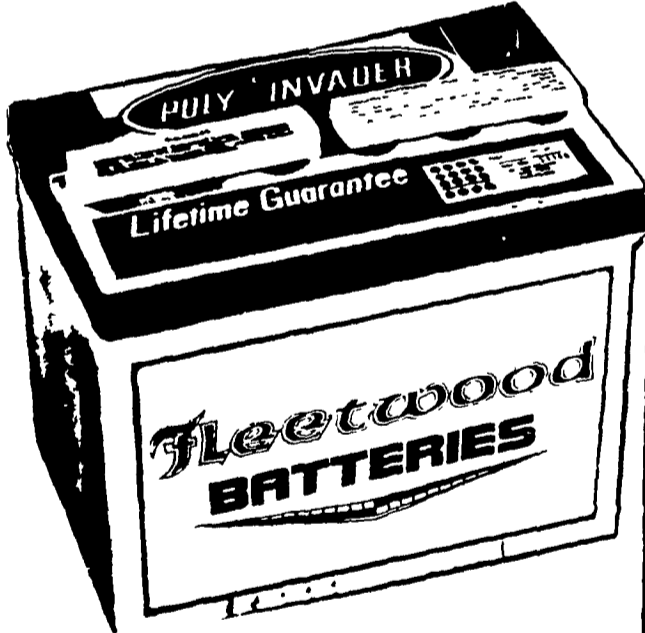
"On the short range scene we're talking about getting roads open to farms, getting fuel deliveries regularized, finding secondary markets where fuel shortages have closed primary buyers, assuring the consumer of a healthful food supply at retail and keeping all lines of communication and effort open with an eye to solving problems as, and in some cases even before, they occur."

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