

Field work in gear

HARRISBURG - Spring took a turn to the better for the Commonwealth's farmers during the week ending April 18, and fieldwork moved into high gear, according to the Pennsylvania Crop Reporting Service. The weather through the week was sunny, warm and dry, with temperatures ranging 10-15 degrees above normal. With the exception of a few light scattered showers Wednesday night, rain was nonexistent, for the driest extended period in the commonwealth since August.

Plowing and planting took over at a rapid pace amid some scattered concern that the dry weather could put stress on some fruit and field crops. More than five days were considered suitable for fieldwork throughout the state.

Soil moisture level was rated adequate on a statewide basis last week. A few reports of excess moisture were received, mostly in central and southern counties.

The relatively dry soils gave way to the plow as plowing moved to about one-third completed, far shy of last year's 60 per cent by this time. Southern operators have 40 per cent of their plowing completed, central counties stand at 35 per cent and the north is one-fourth done.

Planting of oats, at 25 per cent complete is behind the 40 per cent plus at this time last year. Southern counties are approaching one-half done while central areas are at about one-quarter and the north remains about 15 per cent. Tobacco beds are virtually sown.

Potato planting, at just under 10 per cent lags behind the 17 per cent planted a year ago. Only scattered fields are planted in the north, while central and southern areas are 13 and 18 per cent planted, respectively.

Barley and wheat are still in quite good condition. The crops remain in the pre-boot stage of their development.

The asparagus and green peas which azure up look good.

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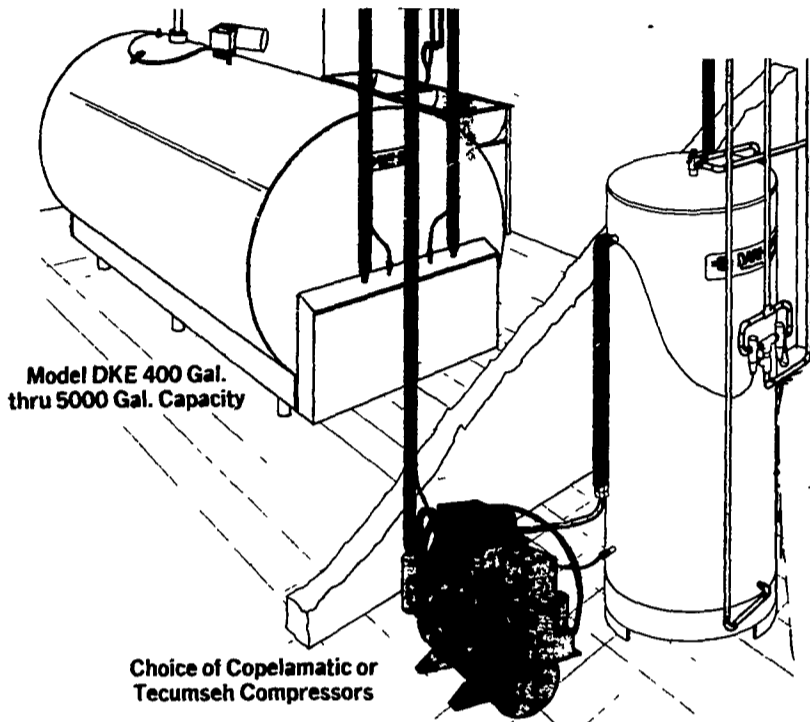
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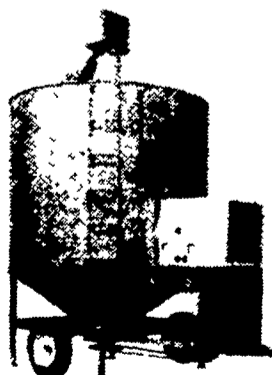
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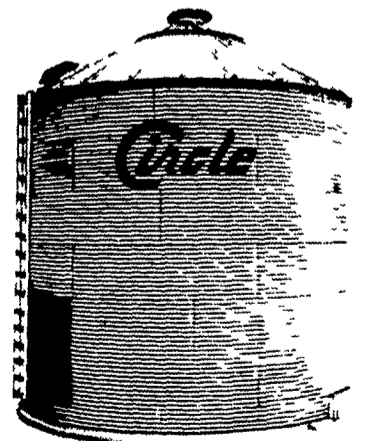
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