

Wheat yields

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benefitting from it greatly. Even wheat fields which were hit by severe thunderstorms and hail came through with little damage. One of the reasons for it is that most of the earlier varieties of wheat had already ripened and were safe and sound in the grain bins. Later maturing varieties still stood strong enough to hold their grain. Prospects for this year's harvest were dim a few months ago after one of the worst Winters in memory played havoc with fields. Many fields were off to a poor start. Some stands were so weak that farmers

decided to plow them under. Somehow the fields recuperated, however, and most reports on yields are in the neighborhood of 50 bushels per acre.

Reporting from York County, the state's number one wheat producing area, Agricultural Agent John Smith says yields are inconsistent - "really good to mediocre and on down to poor, depending on how it got through the Winter." Smith explained that the Redcoat varieties appeared to have survived the Winter a little better than some others, such as Abe. "The price for wheat is poorer than the yield," the county agent concluded. The harvest is

about half done in York County.

Wheat millers in Lancaster County who were contacted by Lancaster Farming this week all reported test weights of 60 pounds or better. A spokesman at the Nelson Weaver firm, Lititz, described the crop as "excellent so far," and expressed hope that the recent rains would not have changed that situation too much. Moisture of wheat received at Weaver's was testing around 13 to 18 per cent.

A spokesman for Nolt's Mill in Bird-in-Hand noted that some of his wheat was coming in very dry, but "quite a bit has been tough." Test weights were around 61 pounds per bushel. Yields hovered as high as 55 to 60 bushels per acre.

Clair Frey, a custom combiner in the Lititz area, has combined about 40 acres of wheat so far, with another 125 to 150 to go. He estimates yields at between 40 and 50 bushels per acre. Noting that the earlier varieties - Abe and Arthur - tested between 13½ and 14 per cent moisture, he feels it's just a bit early yet for combining Redcoat, which reads out between 14 and 17 per cent on the moisture scale. In conclusion, he described the grain as "real good with a lot of straw."

Reporting from Chester County, Melvin Hostetter, a grain handler, says the crop is about 15 to 20 per cent harvested. Test weights are running at 60 to 61 pounds per bushel, which the Oxford area farmer described as "really good." Hostetter also had high marks for yields and the Winter survival rate. Most fields were yielding around 45-bushels per acre., Hostetter reported, with some going up as high as 55 to 60 bushels per acre.

Tom Flory of Flory's Mill near Lancaster gave this report: "Abe and Arthur are just about done, with Recoat ready to begin. So far I haven't received any loads weighing under 60 pounds per bushel; it's very heavy wheat and for the most part very dry. Some of it is as low as 10.6 per cent moisture. I think we'll have less wheat than last year, due to the harsh Winter and low price, which is encouraging farmers to feed more of it."

The national wheat glut is making news in big city newspapers and on national TV. Some of the nation's best-known commentators and columnists have also given attention to the subject, noting that wheat prices are a dollar below a year ago, while the costs of raising the crop are increasing. Combines, for example can cost around \$50,000.

The national wheat crop this year was planted on an estimated 74.4 million acres and is expected to yield around two billion bushels. It's one of the biggest production years on record at a time when surpluses are the highest they've been in

more than a decade. Prices meanwhile, are at their lowest point in five years. Compounding the situation is that other nations around the world have plenty of wheat of their own, thus closing many of this nation's traditional export outlets

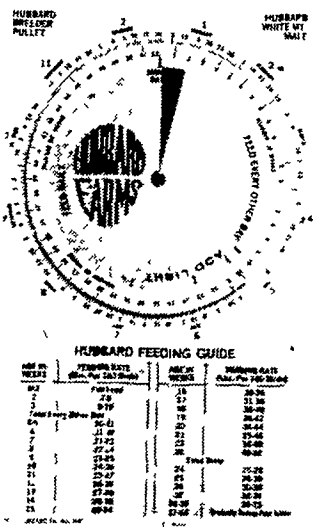
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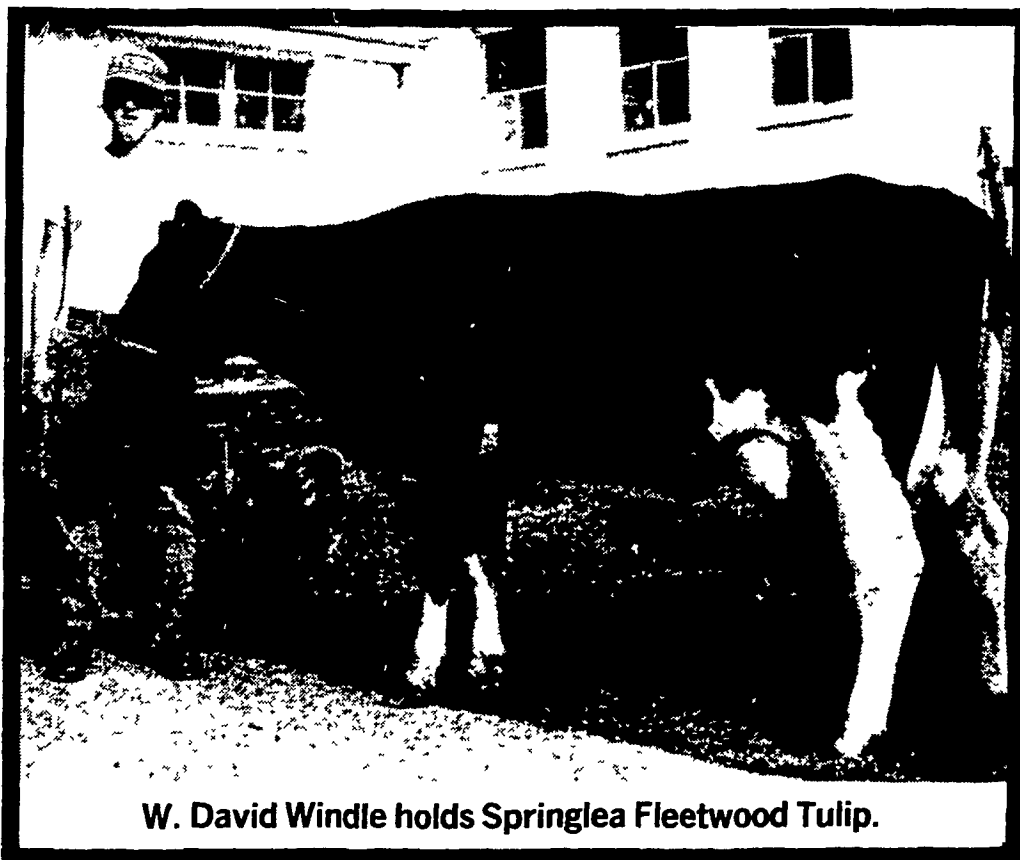
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