

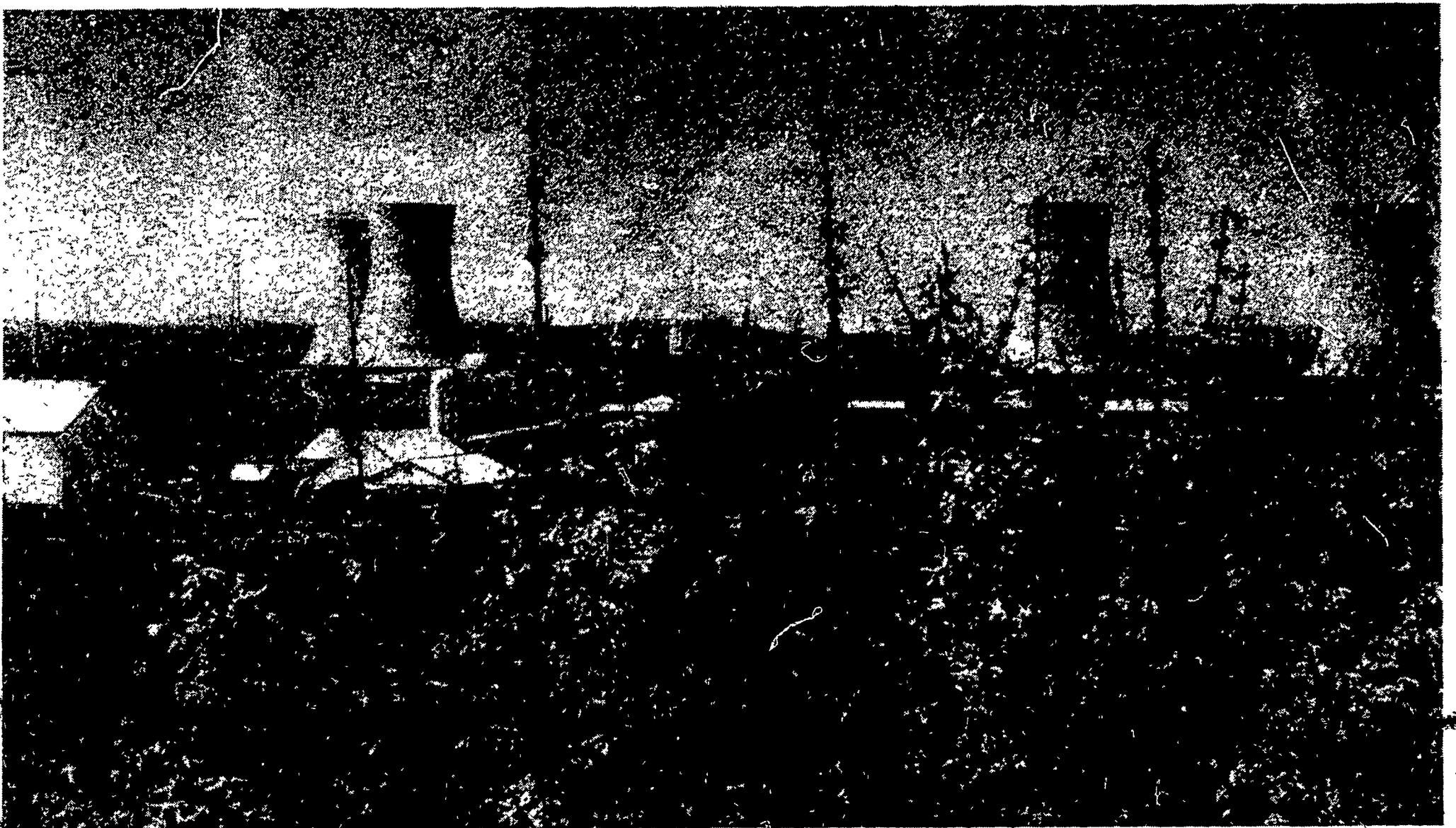
Lancaster Farming

Serving The Central and Southeastern Pennsylvania Areas

VOL. 24 No. 22 24

Lancaster Farming, Saturday, April 14, 1979

\$6.00 Per Year



Forsythias are coming into bloom again, even in the close proximity of Three Mile Island. Along with the blossoms comes the good news from officials that Pennsylvania agriculture and its people remained unharmed by the radiation

leaks from the nuclear facility. The farm dwarfed by the cooling towers is owned by Robert Gruber.

Lancaster Farming photo by Dieter Krieg

Milk handlers report steady sales

By DIETER KRIEG
HARRISBURG — Milk coming from dairy farms in southcentral Pennsylvania has been declared safe and according to numerous milk handlers in the region, sales have been normal.

In the wake of what is being considered the nation's worst nuclear accident, Henry R. Geisinger, executive vice president of the Pennsylvania

Association of Milk Dealers speculates that some dairies may have been hurt by negative publicity, but all in all sales were not down. Instead, sales just shifted, he said. The reason for the shift is that an estimated 80,000 people had left the Harrisburg area and gone to live elsewhere for a few days. As a result sales of all commodities were down.

"But the demand for milk

in the State College, and Williamsport area was tremendous," Geisinger continued, explaining that these towns evidently harbored thousands of evacuees.

In assessing the situation, Geisinger had high praise for Pennsylvania Governor Richard Thornburgh, Agriculture Secretary Penrose Hallowell, and Department of En-

vironmental Resources chief Cliff Jones. "They did a great job coordinating monitoring procedures and handling news releases," Geisinger said. "I appreciate the sensible approach taken by the Governor's office. The people trusted him and that is reflected in the dairy industry upholding its sales."

Geisinger is not alone in

praising officials in the state capital. Other dairy industry leaders made similar remarks.

Jim Sumner, speaking on behalf of Inter-State Milk Producers Cooperative, put it this way: "I think that the positive action taken by Hallowell averted a major economic crisis to dairymen."

Only one of the dairy companies contacted in

recent days by Lancaster Farming indicated that they had lost a significant number of sales as a result of the nuclear accident on Three Mile Island.

Paul Meckley, spokesman for Harrisburg Dairies, was the exception to the rule. He reported some resistance on the part of consumers and guessed it may have been

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Fewer feeder cattle seen at Va. auctions

By KENDACE BORRY
RICHMOND, Va. — "There are as many feeder steer sales as normal, there are just less cattle being sold." That's the way Mike Carpenter, market development, Virginia Department of Agriculture, Division of Markets, explained it. "The special sales started March 28 and will continue to run through April 24, with there being 24 of them in all—especially for feeder steers and heifers. A couple of sales have had pretty good numbers, but the numbers are down at the smaller sales.

But, he further explained, it's part of that by-now familiar story of cattle numbers being down everywhere. "There just aren't as many cattle around," he commented. "There aren't as many

breeding cows or feeder cattle." He related that prices for 500 to 700 pound choice and fancy steers are ranging from 85 cents to a dollar a pound. The same grade heifer, at the same weight,

is bringing 75 to 85 cents per pound. This, he added, is the highest price that cattle have ever brought.

Feeder cattle suppliers are generally happy about the prices, stating that

profits are up, despite the smaller number of cattle being sold. Part of the reason cattle supplies have been dwindling has been because of the herd reductions made due to the

poor economics of raising cattle in the past few years. Carpenter stated that as of this past week, prices at the sales were going higher every day, and these prices being received for cattle now, may be the highest for the year.

Reggie Reynolds, Baleville, Va., executive secretary of the Virginia Beef Cattle Association, sees a 15 per cent reduction in the number of feeder cattle being sold this year. And this shorter supply of cattle will continue for the next two years, he reasoned.

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May Yours be a Joyful Easter