

Upgraded feeder cattle standards proposed

NEW YORK, N.Y. - The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) has called for public comments on a proposal to revise feeder cattle standards to use frame size and muscle thickness as grade factors.

Assistant Secretary of Agriculture P. R. Smith said the dramatic change in feeder cattle types now raised in the United States, coupled with the 1976 changes in slaughter cattle and beef carcass standards, are the key reasons for recommending the change.

Public comments on the proposal will be received until July 1.

"When the present standards were adopted in 1964," he said, "most cattle were British breeds or their crosses with similar body types. However there are now more than 40 breeds in this country which are much more variable in body type."

The proposed grades would separate feeder cattle into large, medium and small frame sizes and thickness categories of No. 1, No. 2 and No. 3. Under the proposal, frame size would

identify the weight at which feeder cattle are expected to produce carcasses of given grade, such as U.S. Choice. Thickness, would identify feeders for the effect that muscle thickness has on the ultimate U.S. yield grade of its carcass.

Smith said the AMS has worked closely with many industry groups to develop the proposal.

"Some members of the beef industry," he said,

"have expressed concern about the use of muscling as a grade factor and that thick muscling may cause production problems. This caused us to put less emphasis on muscle thickness than was originally proposed in a 1976 study draft."

Public comments on the proposal should be sent, in duplicate, to the hearing clerk, USDA, 1077-S, Washington, D.C., 20250. Phone (202) 447-5679.

Visiting farm group

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offered a few comparisons which helped to explain why land prices and living costs are considerably higher in West Germany.

One German farmer, for example, asked what a 10-day old Guernsey bull calf might bring at the auction. The host answered \$60, a price which nearly startled the inquisitive farmer. He thought the calf would bring 600 German Marks in Germany, which would translate into \$320. The German joked he could make a handsome profit by coming to the United States every week to buy calves which he would in turn sell in his homeland. The dairy business has declined sharply in Schleswig-Holstein, with many farmers now concentrating heavily on grains. Prices paid to farmers there are considerably higher than those paid here. The main crops in Schleswig-Holstein are rape, barley, wheat, and sugarbeets. A crop that's gaining in popularity is corn. It can only be grown for silage, however, since the region's cool climate would not allow the corn to mature.

Corn is now a popular feed for livestock. Twenty years ago the crop was barely introduced into the area because the growing season is too short. New varieties have changed all of that. Another noteworthy change is that corn has made its way to the German dinner table. This became obvious as the visiting farm wives recognized the yellow vegetable at the Harvest Drive Restaurant, Intercourse, where they had stopped for lunch. Many of them were anxious to spoon out generous helpings. All were eager to try the different varieties of food and marveled repeatedly at the quantities of food that were offered.

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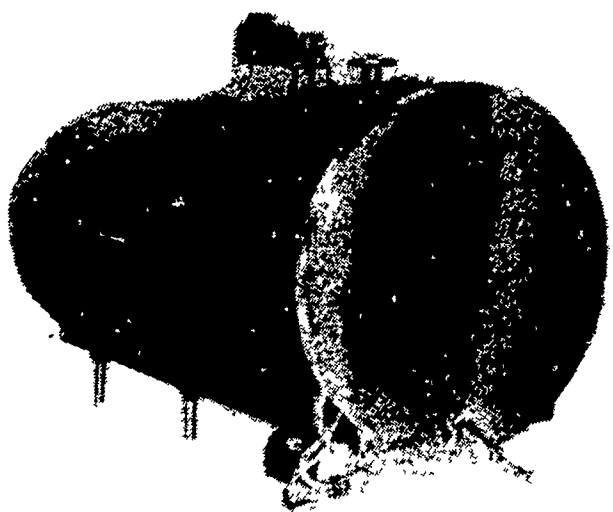
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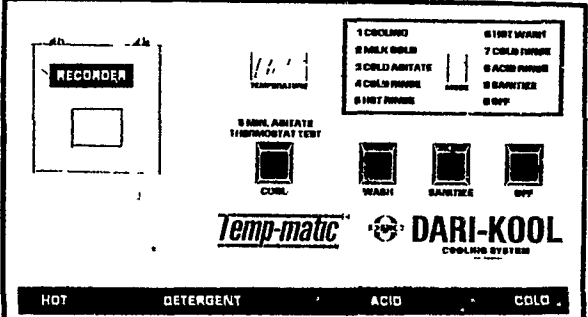
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