

Consumer group blames boycott on ignorance

DARIEN, Conn. — A national grassroots consumer group, in an effort to better inform the public on issues relating to consumer prices, says the meat boycotts of 1973 contributed to today's beef shortages and that any such organized

boycott now shows "considerable ignorance of the ways of the meat marketplace. The Consumer Alert Council, headquartered here, explains that cattle cycles are about five years in duration and that the shortages experienced now

are a result of too many boycott headlines in 1973.

The consumer group issued the following statement:

In response to rising beef prices, several New York consumer leaders are attempting to stimulate organized consumer boycotts.

There is little doubt that consumers are individually reacting to the climbing cost of beef, as well as other food products. As shoppers make economic decisions and move alternately between beef, poultry, pork, and meatless meals the market is already behaving predictably.

The meat industry can be expected to react predictably too. It will register the response from consumers, and both supply and prices will find their appropriate levels. Before New York consumers add their support to ill conceived 'organized' meat boycotts, they would do well to analyze just what the

long-range consequences of such action would be.

For we can't deny the fact that the last publicized beef boycott in the East was a contributing factor in the beef shortages and related higher prices we are facing today!

People who grow beef for consumption try to anticipate the market some two to five years in advance. They are apt to and do in fact overreact to organized boycotts of their product.

Like investors on Wall Street, cattlemen respond psychologically rather than logically to market fluctuations. Planned reductions, as in organized boycotts during 1973, cause cattlemen to cut back much farther on their herds than they ordinarily would have.

Though most consumers didn't participate in the last beef boycott; cattlemen, believing they might, held back on breeding.

Since cattle breeding and raising are subject to

biological cycles and timetables, there is nothing increased demand (or lower prices) can do to hasten beef production. Biological beef cycles are subject to five years no matter what the demand.

Today's shortages are evidence of the cattle industry's "response to the organized beef boycott." Principally the publicity given that boycott made the action look more widespread than was actually reflected in purchasing cutbacks by shoppers.

Some things are better left unorganized... letting the market and independent action by consumers in the purchase of beef is one of them.

Cattlemen are exceedingly reluctant to invest borrowed money and years of breeding in feeding animals that are not going to bring a market profit.

The solution? Individual action, rather than organized and publicized boycotting, is just as effective in bringing prices down and far less likely to cause imbalance, overreaction, and wild fluctuations in supply.

Mr. Ratner, NYC Con-

sumer Affairs Commissioner, and Ms. Pooler, executive director NY State Consumer Protection Board, are showing considerable ignorance of the ways of the meat marketplace.

Meat is a prized dietary component in this country and prices, though higher today, are nowhere near what our Japanese friends are paying — \$25.00 a pound for steak!

No doubt Mr. Ratner and Ms. Pooler are seeking ways to help consumers. This should start with a firm understanding of the mechanisms in the marketplace that truly bring about lower prices and enhanced supply.

They need to know, for instance, that a study carried out for the National Academy of Sciences turned up the fact that hamburger meat in this country is presently affected by 41,000 regulations, 200 legal statutes, and 111,000 precedent setting court actions which have boosted the cost of hamburger for consumers by 8 to 11 cents a pound.

A little deregulation and a lot less headline could truly reduce the cost of meat.

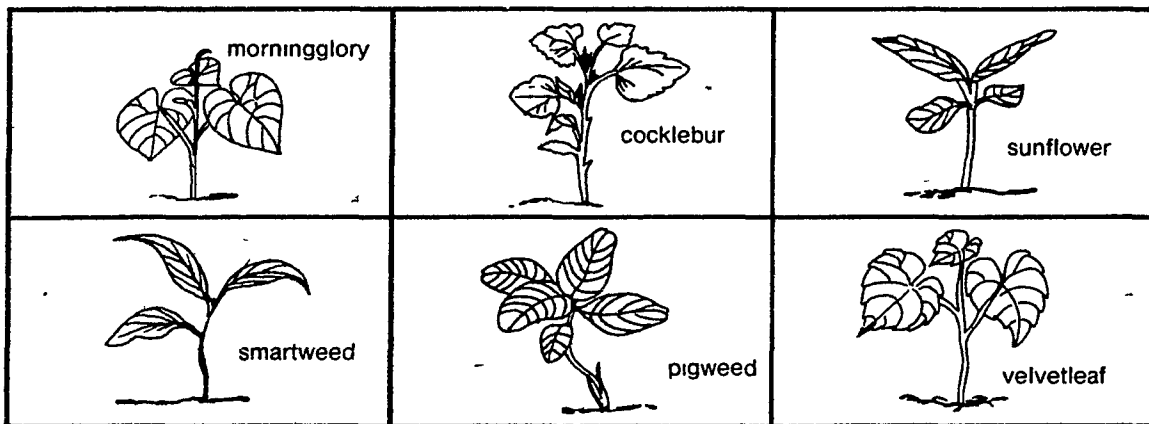
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Landowners urged to eradicate multiflora rose

ANNAPOLIS, Md. - Rodman Myers, master of the Maryland State Grange, has issued a statement urging landowners to control multiflora roses. The next two weeks, multiflora rose bushes will be blooming and birds will carry seeds to new areas.

The Md. State Grange has policy for several years concerning this spreading menace. Myers said "Landowners should use bulldozers, and farm tractor loaders to uproot the rose bushes. Tordon, a pellet type chemical can be used as a hand treatment to kill these bushes. Thousands of acres of good farmland is being

taken over and if landowners do not start taking this matter to heart, many valuable acres will be lost."

Myers, a dairy farmer, said he bought two farms that had multiflora roses and finally got rid of them by spraying and bulldozing, and now farms much of this land. 245-T, an excellent spray chemical, was recently suspended until further notice.

As farmers continue to lose farmland to highways, shopping centers and housing developments, people must put a stop to the spreading of multiflora rose, Myers stated.

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