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Lester Nolt surveys the damage done to his chicken house by a freak wind. The gust struck at 3:30 a.m. Christmas Day, lifting the roof of the building and setting it down about 200 feet away. Notice the stack of straw that was not disturbed. More pictures on page 33.

Wind deals big blow to Manheim farmer

BY SHEILA MILLER
MANHEIM — A freak wind storm wrecked an old chicken house and damaged several other buildings during the night on Christmas morning. Lester Nolt, of R1 Manheim, suffered the worst damage from the storm.
 Nolt told LANCASTER FARMING he couldn't believe his eyes when he got up Christmas morning and saw the damage that had occurred during the night.
 The first thing he noticed was that the corn barn doors had been blown open. When he looked out in the small grain strip behind the barn,

he saw a heap of trash in the field.
 Nolt said that he didn't realize where the pile of rubble had come from until he looked at his cinder block chicken house.
 The walls of the house were gone, along with the roof. One wall had been pushed onto the shed's floor, while the other wall was pushed over into the field. The roof of the building had been carried about 200 feet into an adjacent strip of corn stalks.
 The glass panes in the windows of the chicken house were for the most part intact. And a stack of straw

remained standing without a bale out of place.
 The Nolt's garage also was damaged. The roof was lifted in the southwest corner, but it was not taken off.
 With all of the noise and commotion going on in the night, Nolt said that he did wake up and look out. But, when he looked at a neighbor's trailer and saw that it was all right, he went back to sleep.
 "It was a pretty strong wind," said Nolt. "We can just be grateful that nothing worse happened." The Nolt's have 100 hogs in the bottom floor of the chicken house, and they weren't even scratched.

Several years ago, Nolt went to Indiana with his church to help clean up after the tornados and storms hit the Midwest farmers. "This time it just hit a little closer home," he said.

Tobacco buyers fought for this year's crop

BY DEBRA STRICKLER
LITITZ — This year's tobacco buying market can be simply described as "crazy."
 Never in buying history has the tobacco price jumped a nickel in a single bound.
 Even more amazing, the price jumped a nickel twice in one week.
 The tobacco market opened on December 11 with

most buyers offering 65 cents a pound, two cents above last year's average. Little tobacco moved at this price.
 Since the tobacco was weighing lighter than last year's crop, many producers were determined to keep their crop until the price reached 70 cents.
 A week later on December 18, the price inflated to 70 cents.

The sudden five cent price increase surprised area growers. Many decided to sell their crop, while others were determined to hold on, waiting for another price increase.
 Last Friday, two companies, Lorillards and Bloch Brothers entered the market at 75 cents.
 There was a great demand for top quality tobacco this year. As a result, most of the other buyers followed suit.
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In Cumberland Valley Farmer-Trail dispute reopens on Thursday

BY CURT HARLER
CARLISLE — Farmers and outdoorsmen Thursday night will meet here in another attempt to iron out a compromise in the Cumberland Valley's hottest land use fight.
 At stake on the one hand are several hundred acres of prime Cumberland County farmland.
 On the other hand is the future of the internationally famous Appalachian Trail which winds its way from Maine to Georgia. About 12 miles of trail run through the Cumberland Valley following highways from above New Kingston south to the Boiling Springs area.

But the springs aren't the only things boiling in the Valley today — landowners, and especially farmers, don't want to see prime land taken so the trail can be moved off the highways.
 The National Park Service and the Appalachian Trail Conference both want to move the trail off the roads and into an appropriately scenic and non-urbanized setting.
 At the Thursday meeting the two sides once again will try to establish a common ground, to reach a compromise acceptable to the landowners and to the Department of the Interior.
 The meeting will be held on the second floor of the New Courthouse in Carlisle, January 3, at 7 p.m.

The 12 mile section of trail in the Valley is just one portion of a \$90 million three year project by the Department of Interior's National Park Service to relocate the trail.

The concept and funds were approved by the Congress in the Scenic Trails Act.
 The Cumberland Valley section was one of the first areas tackled by the National Park Service. And it has proved to be one of the toughest.
 Farmers balked at the proposal originally presented about a year ago. That proposal, termed "optimum" by the National Park Service, would have provided for a 1963 foot scenic easement through the Valley.
 Of course, most of the Cumberland Valley is developed either in homes or for agriculture.
 One farmer figured he could lose as much as 100

acres of land if the proposal were adopted. That would have included a farm pond built with ASCS money.
 Sheldon B. Brymnesser, R 2 Boiling Springs, said the original proposal could have meant he and his father Stanley could have seen 15 acres of their dairy operation go for the trail.
 Since that time, about a year ago, several proposals and counter-proposals have been advanced.
 Focus of Thursday night's meeting probably will be the proposal by the Park Service and Appalachian Trail Conference to hire a consultant to prepare maps of the area in question and outline a proposed alternate route.

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Twenty-four inactive stands at Lancaster's Central Market, similar to this one currently run by Regine Ibold, were auctioned Thursday. See story on page 39.

As costs rise, profits shrink

Local egg production levels off

BY DICK WANNER
LITITZ — After two years of climbing, the egg business in Southeastern Pennsylvania has hit a plateau.
 Few new layer houses are being built right now, and two ag lenders report that their requests for layer financing have dropped dramatically in the last three to six months.
 "The egg price hasn't been too smart lately," said Carl Brown, head of Lancaster's Farm Credit office. "Building costs are up tremendously compared to three or four years ago, and pullets cost \$2.25 apiece".

New layer housing costs about \$7 per bird.
 "If a farmer borrows at 14-percent for a 60,000 bird house, the interest alone will cost him nearly a dollar per bird per year. And if he borrows another \$135,000 to put in his pullets, he's going to be doing a lot of work before he makes any money for himself," Brown said.
 One problem Brown sees is building costs going up at the rate of 10- to 20-percent per year, but the prices for eggs and broilers aren't increasing nearly that fast.
 As prices lag behind costs, profit margins are eaten

away and the risks, both for independent farmer producers and for integrated feed companies, become unacceptable.
 Both Brown and Robert Bucher, president of Commonwealth National Bank's Agri-Loan division, said their egg producing loan customers are still operating at a profit. But their profits reflect 1979 egg prices and 1977 or earlier building costs.
 With uncertainties clouding the outlook, more and more egg producers are opting for contract arrangements with integrated feed-processing-marketing firms.

Under a typical contract, a farmer owns his laying house, but the feed company owns the birds and pays for the feed and medication. The farmer is guaranteed a return on his investment and labor.
 An independent egg producer owns his birds as well as his facilities. In a good market, he will probably make more money than the contract owner, but the margin for error can be slim. "It doesn't take long to lose 50 cents or a dollar a bird," Brown pointed out.
 Bucher said his bank had

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