

National board recommends ag transportation policy

WASHINGTON, D.C. — A rural transportation task force Wednesday proposed major changes in the "rules of the road" for railroads and ag truckers doing business in the United States.

The Rural Transportation Advisory Task Force, a joint team co-chaired by Agriculture Secretary Bob Bergland and Transportation Secretary Neil Goldschmidt, recommends:

Incentives to encourage states to increase truckload limits to 80,000 pounds and length limits to 65 feet on interstate and other major highways, along with in-

centives to states trying to resolve varying state regulations.

Regulatory reforms to permit railroads and shippers to enter into negotiated or regulated contracts.

Use of long-term loans to finance rail rehabilitation on lines serving ports.

Immediate acquisition by railroads of a demonstration, free-running fleet of 500 fifty-foot, wide-door, general-purpose boxcars and 500 covered hopper cars to augment the railroads' individually-owned car fleets.

Continuation of federal financial assistance for railroad branchline rehabilitation projects.

That the Interstate Commerce Commission, Department of Transportation, and Department of Agriculture monitor the effectiveness of the task force's recommendations and write a report to Congress each year.

That the federal government take more responsibility for interstates and other major highways, thereby releasing more state funds for the maintenance

and upgrading of non-major highways.

That the secretary of agriculture be given authority to develop and regulate standard contracts of haul for trucking fresh fruits and vegetables. Loading and unloading responsibilities would be imposed on shippers and receivers.

In the area of waterway service impediments, the task force recommends replacement of Locks and Dam 26 on the upper Mississippi River with two locks.

"The recommendations are part of the final report by the task force, which deliberated ten months to establish the policy," said P.R. Smith, assistant secretary of agriculture for marketing and transportation.

Smith said the report defines agriculture's transportation needs and suggests solutions to problems, based on public hearings the task force conducted during 1979. Discussions focused on railcar shortages, rail branchline abandonments,

several highway and waterway bottlenecks, and problems between shippers and carriers.

"The task force set forth guidelines for an adequate railroad transportation system, including changes in federal regulation of railroads," Smith said.

Congress formed the task force, he said, in response to agriculture's special transportation needs. Members were from agricultural and transportation organizations as well as from the academic community.

Sheep, lambs on feed up 3 percent

WASHINGTON, D.C. — On January 1, 1980 an estimated 1.62 million sheep and lambs were on feed for the slaughter market in 24 States, three percent more than a year earlier but virtually the same as the January 1, 1978 level.

The seven major feeding States had 993 thousand sheep and lambs on feed January 1, two percent less than a year earlier.

Of this total, 568 thousand were placed on feed before November 1 and 425 thousand placed on feed during November and December. Feeders in the seven major States marketed 465 thousand sheep and lambs during November and December 1979.

Marketings for the two months were 20 percent below the like period in 1978.

Of the total number on feed January 1, 1980, in the seven States 5 percent weighed less than 70 pounds;

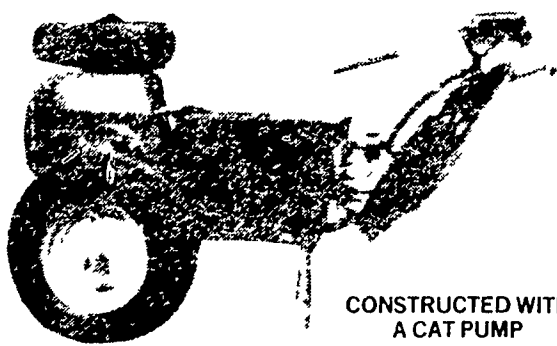
11 percent weighed 70-79 pounds; 23 percent weighed 80-89 pounds; 33 percent weighed 90-99 pounds; 28 percent weighed 100 pounds and over.



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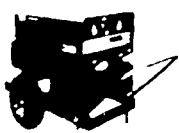


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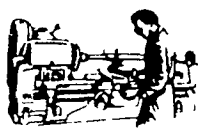
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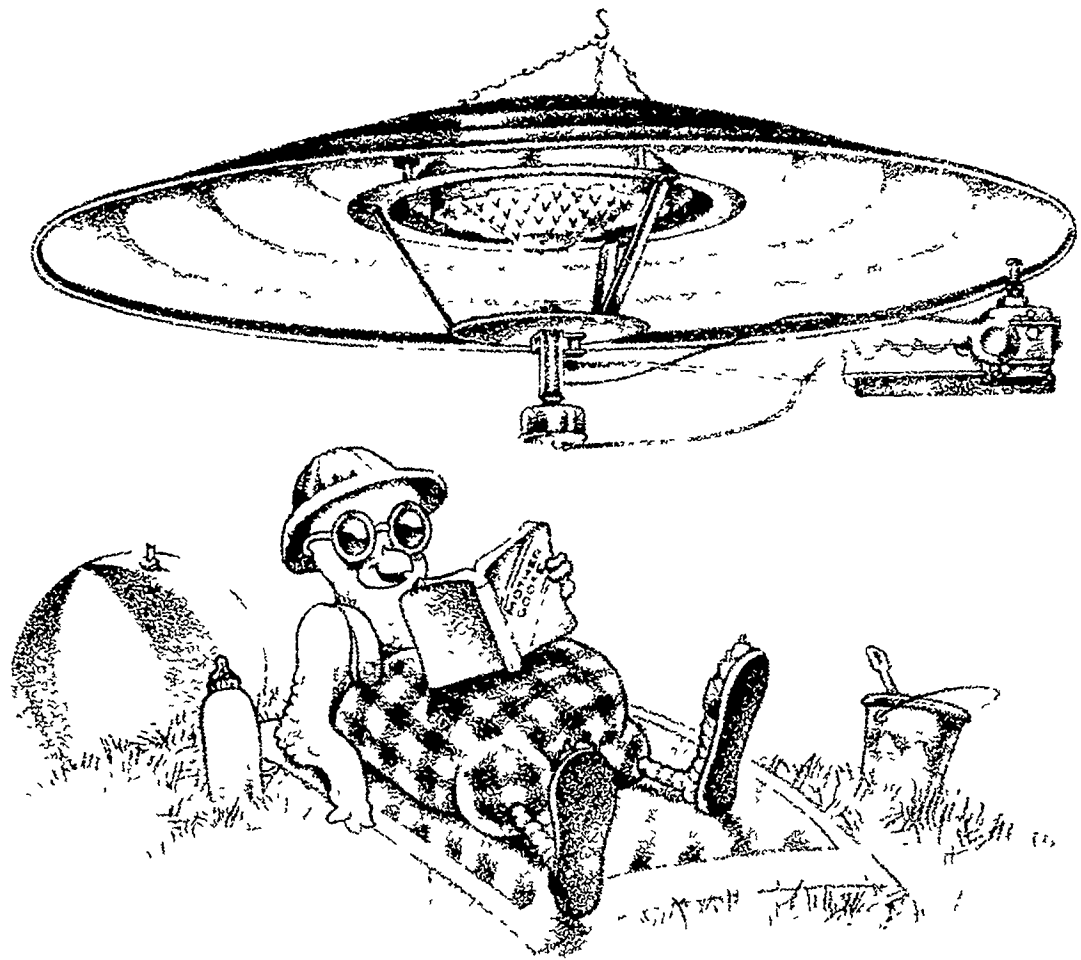
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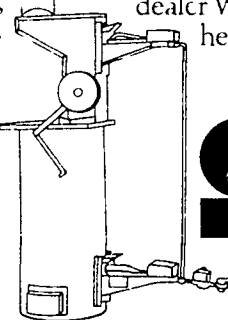
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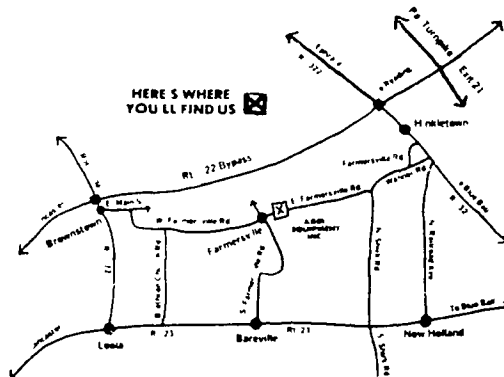
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