

Economist optimistic about milk



Brief answers
to short questions
**Sheila's
Shorts**
By Sheila Miller

Water, water, everywhere!
As the winter months come to an end, many of us are looking toward the gentle spring showers that are always promised in April.

After a dry winter like we've experienced this past winter, it is almost hard to imagine having too much water. The soil is really dry, right now, and the streams are probably at their lowest point in years.

But, soon, the spring rains will come to soak into the warming soil. These rain showers are not always the gently falling rains described in poetry; but all too often, they are vicious downpours that scour the land and muddy-up the streams.

So, what can you do now to prepare for these torrential rains? Well, there's probably not a whole heck of a lot you can do, but if you farmed with controlling the excess water in mind, you should survive the Pennsylvania monsoons with very little damage.

Many farmers are farming with diversions and waterways, cropland terraces with tile outlets, and some have even gone so far as to construct holding ponds to store some of the runoff water.

With as little moisture as has fallen from the skies this winter, by July and August, the water that is kept in the fields now may make a big difference in the next harvest.

But what do you do if you're farming with storm water management in mind, and a housing development moves in next door. Suddenly where there were hay fields and contour strips, there are streets and homes. The spring rains have a hard time soaking into roof tops and asphalt.

Although you might feel a bit helpless in stopping the uncontrolled-water pouring off adjacent land, there is something that you can do

besides looking for a giant cork.

On October 4, 1978, Milton Shapp signed into law Act 167, the Storm Water Management Act. This law was passed to stop what they termed, "accelerated runoff".

This runoff is the result of development and creates a situation where there is too much water for the streams and current storm sewer facilities to handle.

What happens then is the storm water gets out of control and takes off on a damaging spree, eroding away soil which clogs the stream channels. In its worst stage, the uncontrolled water becomes a raging flood, destroying homes and property and sometimes claiming lives.

The October, 1978 law calls for:

—Planning and management of storm water runoff in every watershed, consistent with sound water and land use practices.

—Developing a comprehensive program of storm water management to preserve and restore the flood carrying capacity of Commonwealth streams, to preserve the natural storm water runoff courses, and to protect the ground water and recharge areas.

—Encouraging the local administration and management of storm water.

But, the act goes one step further. In section 13 it states:

"Any landowner and any person engaged in the alteration or development of land which may affect storm water runoff characteristics shall implement such measures consistent with the provisions of the applicable watershed storm water plan as are reasonably necessary to prevent injury to health, safety or other property. Such measures shall include such actions as are required:

—to assure that the

LEBANON — William Johnston, Extension agricultural economist from Penn State told Lebanon County farmers there is conflict in the milk market. He was speaking to a group of nearly 100 farmers during a meeting held last Thursday at the Treadway Inn, Lebanon.

The meeting was sponsored by the Lebanon Valley National Bank, and featured presentations by Johnston, on milk marketing; Steve Hoffman, on tax planning; and Darryl Ford, on estate planning.

Johnston pointed out there are conflicts in the milk marketing industry between farmers with high and low butterfat production, resulting in differential payments. He also cited the current head-to-head discussions between the co-ops and independent milk producers.

The Extension economist chided the dairymen for turning their marketing responsibilities over to someone else, namely the co-ops and the state and federal milk marketing boards.

"The market requires your constant attention to keep it humming," he said. "Your income and future are tied to marketing. There is

maximum rate of storm water runoff is no greater after development than prior to development activities; or

—to manage the quantity, velocity and direction of resulting storm water runoff in a manner which otherwise adequately protects health and property from possible injury.

What this part of the law does is gives some teeth to enforcing the control of storm water runoff.

If you are having a problem with a neighbor's storm water being dumped onto your farm, you can call Eugene Council, director of the Division of Storm Water Management in the Department of Environmental Resources and report the problem. His telephone number is 717/787-6827; or you can write to him at Post Office Box 2357, Harrisburg, PA. 17120.

If the problem has been created since the act was passed, you may have some legal help in correcting the nuisance runoff

no book available to learn from completely—you have to pick it up by osmosis and keep abreast with the changes."

Johnston noted milk markets as being one of the highly administered market places, along with liquor, banks, and utilities.

The four "big" issues Johnston discussed included price support, federal orders, co-ops, and imports and substitutes.

"Many dairymen in the East are unaware of how the price support programs affect their paychecks," he stated.

The price support program was started in 1949 with 75-90 percent parity, and in 1977 was changed to 80 percent of parity. Johnston pointed out milk is the only commodity still marketed under parity.

Federal orders governing the milk market have decreased from the original 80 to the present day 47, and there is a question of whether there should be just one order in the North East, according to Johnston.

He mentioned the transportation differentials, and CNI proposals as present conflicts in this area.

"The CNI proposals have threatened the industry somewhat," Johnston noted, "and the major associations, such as the Milk Industry Foundation, the Dairy Processors Association, and the Milk Marketing Foundation, said they feel there are changes needed, but CNI was not the approach to take."

Under the discussion on co-ops, Johnston said he felt they were the major thrust of influence in changing

state and federal regulations. Although he said their present state is fragmented.

Johnston said there is a way for people in the marketing business to get around the regulations on importing and making milk substitutes. He cited the casein manufacturers for an example.

But, despite the on-going conflicts within the milk marketing industry, Johnston said he is optimistic about the future of the Eastern milk producers

"You have the skill, motivation and technology to produce," he said. "But you have to keep studying—more people need to understand the impact of marketing on their future." SM

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