

Tight dairy margins cited at area 4 hearing

HARRISBURG — Slim price margins over the cost of production and outdated methods of computing fuel costs in the dairy pricing formula used by Crop Reporting Service were among factors discussed in Thursday's Area 4 milk hearing.

"One of the major problems facing dairy farmers in Area 4 — and for that matter, the rest of Pennsylvania — is the narrow spread between the average price received for milk and the

cost of production," State Grange Master Charles Wismer said at the hearing held at the Holiday Inn in Harrisburg.

He pointed to statistics presented by the Pennsylvania Crop Reporting Service's Special Dairy report of May 1980.

The Crop Reporting Service's figures for the average price received by farmers in the Philadelphia Milk Shed, as of March 31, 1980, was \$12.78 per hun-

dredweight. According to that same report, the average cost of production in that same milk shed was \$11.72 per hundredweight.

Subtracting the cost of production from the average price received, yields a profit of \$1.02 per hundredweight in the Philadelphia Milk Shed, or, in simpler language, a little over two cents per quart.

Last years figures, again, according to the Crop Reporting Service, placed

the average return over production at 91 cents per hundredweight, or a little under two cents per quart.

"In the course of our investigation of the Crop Reporting Service's methods of computation, we discovered last year that the cost of fuel was not entered into the computations for average cost of production," Wismer said.

"We recently checked back with them to see if this had been changed. While they assured us that they would soon be updating their computation formula, the present average cost of production figures still do not reflect the cost of fuel," he continued.

According to the Agricultural Price Report of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, bulk delivery prices for regular leaded gasoline in Pennsylvania rose from \$1.02 per gallon, as of January 15, 1980, to \$1.17 per gallon, as of May 15, 1980.

According to that same report, diesel fuel bulk delivery prices in Pennsylvania rose from 91 cents per gallon, as of January 15, 1980, to 97 cents per gallon, as of May 15, 1980.

"I might also add that at this time last year, the regular leaded gasoline and bulk diesel fuel prices stood at 75 cents and 64 cents, respectively," he said.

Due to this dramatic rise in fuel costs, coupled with widespread increases in prices in such necessary

commodities such as fertilizers and farm equipment, and an already slim profit margin, it is the opinion of the Grange that some upward modification of the producer price is in order. This modification should be

made in line with the Federal Order price.

"Certainly, any increase granted to the producer should also be granted to the dealers so they do not have to absorb the producer increase," Wismer concluded.

Feeding tips for high energy rations

LITITZ — Modern dairymen are turning to high energy rations to push cattle to their genetic potential.

But along with this switch to higher energy feed has come an increase in rumen acids present in the dairy cows' digestive systems, especially among cows fed ensiled forages and high concentrate levels.

Dairy cows with too much acidity sometimes experience depressed butterfat tests, reduced feed intake, lower milk production and more infertility, says Richard Adams, a dairy nutritionist at Penn State.

One feed ingredient which

has been effective in balancing rumen acids is sodium bicarbonate, a compound which occurs naturally in cows' saliva. However, not enough saliva is secreted to neutralize the acids produced when low-fiber, high-energy rations are fed, especially during hot weather.

In these cases, supplemental feeding of sodium bicarbonate should be considered, Dr. Adams says.

Dairymen feeding sodium bicarbonate should supply it at a level equal to 0.60 percent of dry matter intake.

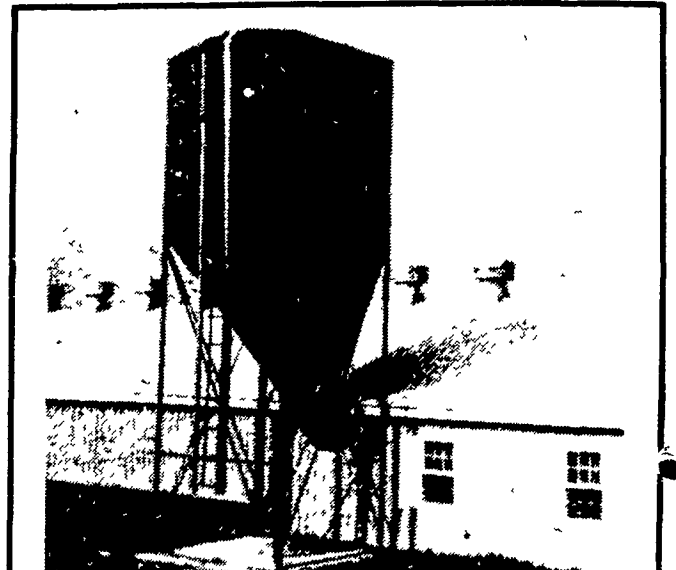
"That's roughly equal to 1 to 1.5 percent in a concentrate mixture or finished feed," Adams explains.

Milk production, butterfat test percentage and dry matter intake may improve separately or in combination when sodium bicarbonate is added to rations in proper amounts.

Adams lists several conditions under which bicarb feeding may be helpful.

- High producing cows consuming concentrates at a level exceeding two percent of their body weight.
- Cows suffering from hot, humid weather, especially when little alfalfa or other legume forage is fed.
- Cows fed less than two pounds of forage on a dry matter basis per 100 pounds of body weight.

-Rations in which forage



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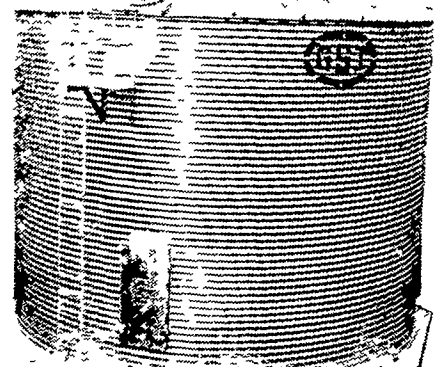
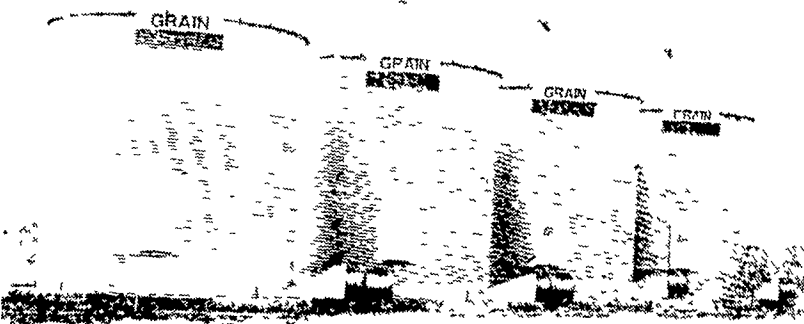
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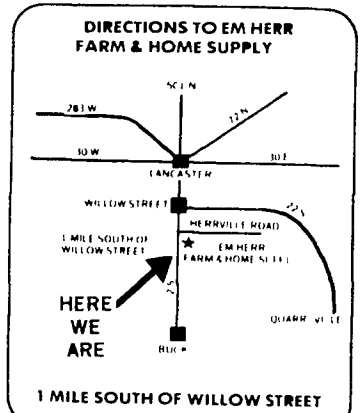
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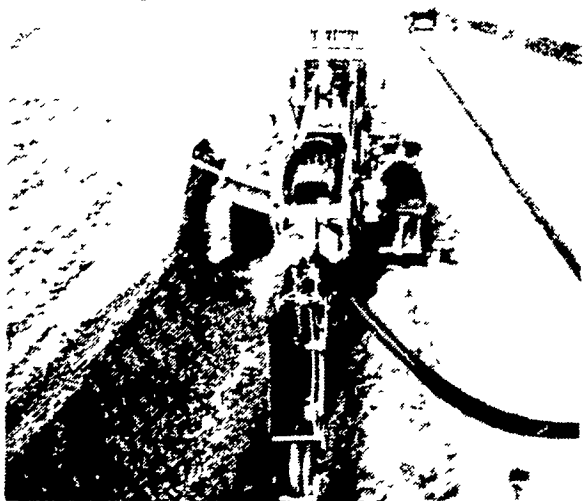


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