

Beef prices on rise in 1981

DENVER, Colo., — Retail beef prices in 1981 are expected to average about 10 percent higher than in 1980, the National Cattlemen's Association predicted Monday.

NCA said present indications are most of the expected price increase will occur in the spring, when meat production will be decreasing seasonally. Beef supplies and prices are expected to be fairly stable during the remainder of the year.

For 1981 in total, beef production will increase about 1 percent, NCA said, and poultry output also will rise. However, pork production will decrease, and total meat production in 1981 will be down slightly from 1980. The drop in pork supplies will contribute to the expected rise in average

beef as well as pork prices. Merlyn Carlson, NCA president, pointed out that the nation's basic inflation problem, affecting the prices of all goods and services, is responsible for much of the recent and expected increase in average meat prices. Supply changes are not the only cause.

The average cattle price received by cattle feeders this year has been slightly less than the 1979 average, Carlson said, but inflation and rising costs of processing and distribution have put upward pressure on retail beef prices. Increase for the year is only 5 percent, or considerably less than the over-all inflation rate.

A major reason for beef's not showing much price increase this year has been the total supply of meat. With an increase in pork

production, in particular, total per capita meat supplies have been record large. While prices of most food and other items continued to rise rapidly, Carlson said, meat prices remained relatively favorable.

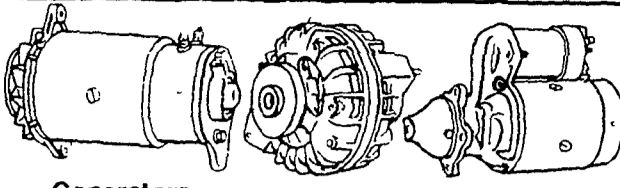
Looking at the economic situation for the cattle industry, Carlson noted that total cattle numbers have been at a cyclical low point for the past two years. Theoretically, at this point in the cattle cycle, cattlemen should be making good profits.

However, energy, interest, feed and other costs have been rising even more than the general inflation rate. At the same time, large total meat supplies, inflation and a weak economy have tended to hurt demand. The result has been a financial squeeze on cattlemen for the past year or more. This situation, Carlson said, may delay or limit future herd expansion.

A major problem at this time results from the 1980 drought, a smaller corn crop and a big increase in feed grain prices. The higher feed costs, Carlson explained, have contributed to financial losses for cattle feeders. That, in turn, means weaker demand and lower prices for feeder cattle (the cattle purchased by feeders, from producers, for finishing in feedlots). Cow-calf operators, who produce beef calves, have been in a break-even or loss position since last February. And a lack of

profits obviously reduces the incentive and ability to expand basic breeding herds, Carlson said.

If the industry's cost-price squeeze continues, he said, the current cyclical build-up in cattle numbers may be slowed or halted. This would mean less beef in future years than generally has been expected.



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Maryland teens

(Continued from Page D5) Aspirations are of a career in veterinary medicine.

Moving to a small farm in 1976 intensified Annette's interest in animals. Looking for help at the Charles county fair led to 4-H membership and a variety of projects, including photography, gardening, field crops, broilers and veterinary science. This latter project resulted in ownership and a chance to practice preventive medicine with beef cattle, sheep and goats. Her interest in photography and veterinary science helped her to master the art of microphotography. Annette's parents are Mr. and Mrs. Paul V. Bailey. Her trip to the National 4-H Congress was sponsored by the Maryland State Veterinary Medical Association.

Charles County - Lori L. Burke, 15, of White Plains; rabbits. Miss Burke is a

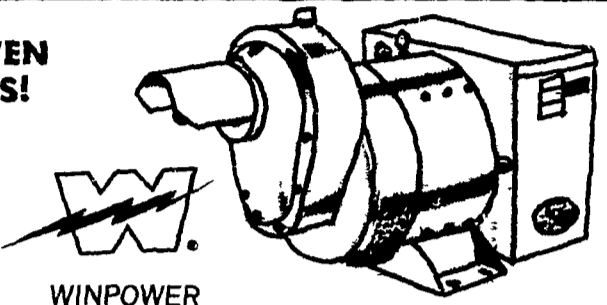
sophomore in McDonough high school at Pomfret. Lori was selected to participate last summer in a program for the gifted and talented at the University of Maryland. She, too, has aspirations for a career in veterinary medicine. Her parents are Mr. and Mrs. Paul T. Burke.

When she moved to Charles county with her family four years ago, Lori decided that joining a 4-H club would be a good way to meet other persons of her age. She already had experience with rabbits, but membership in the county 4-H rabbit club taught her a lot she didn't know previously. She won the junior 4-H rabbit judging contest at the Maryland State Fair in both 1978 and 1979. Other 4-H projects have included small pets, dog training and junior leadership. Her trip to the National 4-H Congress was sponsored by the Maryland State Fair Board.



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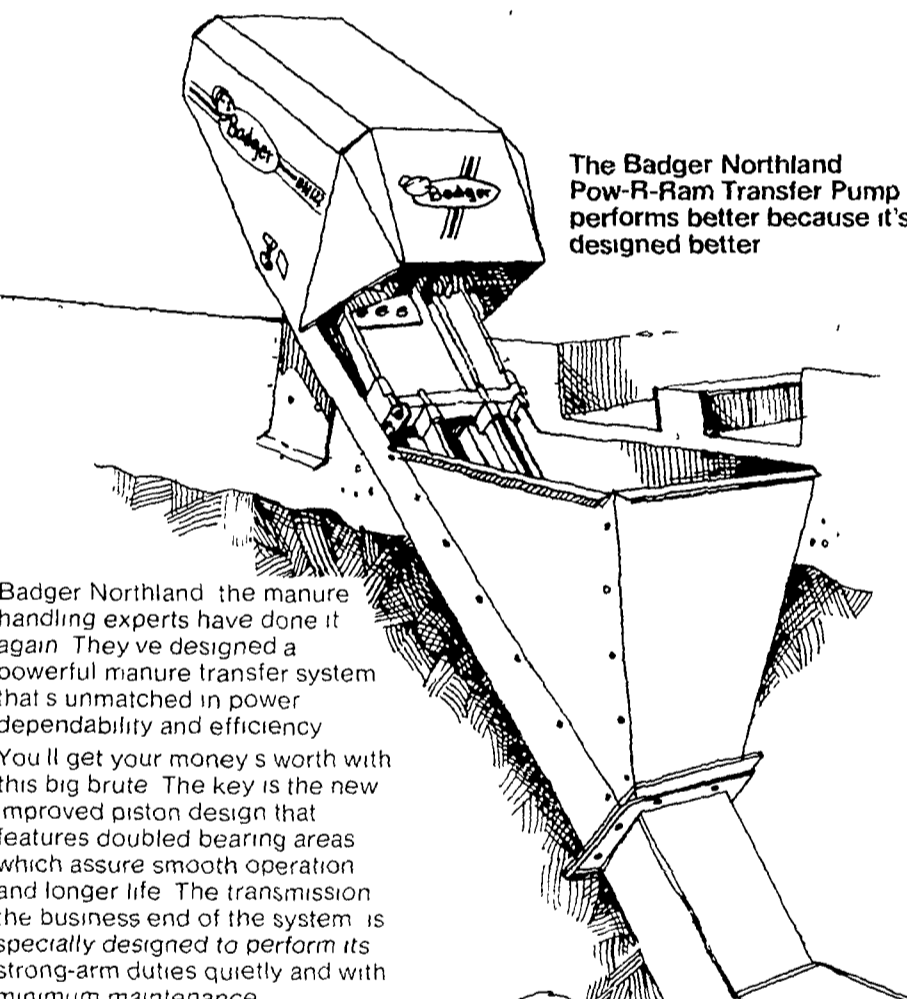
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