

# How to boost lettuce profits

COLLEGE PARK, Md — Lettuce growers can increase profits with a new method of fungicide application which uses less pesticide and, at the same time, improves yields.

Profits for lettuce growers usually can be increased by \$300 to \$400 per acre, Peter B Adams said Friday at a meeting of the Potomac Division of the American Phytopathology Society.

His research shows that lowering the amount of a commercial formulation of metham (32.7 percent active ingredient) from 75-100 gallons per acre (as recommended by the manufacturer) to 25 gallons of the product per acre, reduced losses due to lettuce drop to two percent. This contrasts favorably with 19 percent losses in untreated fields, reported Adams, working at USDA's Science and Education Administration.

The higher amount of metham application is very costly for use on large areas. And Adams, in cooperation with J. Kirkun, a visiting scientist from Israel, found that the lower concentrations of metham (sodium methylthio-

carbamate) were even more effective in destroying the fungus that causes lettuce drop, Sclerotinia minor.

The tests were first done in laboratories at the Beltsville Agricultural Research Center. Then field tests were performed in New Jersey, with the assistance of S A Johnson and J F. Carpenter of Rutgers Research and Development Center. In this second phase, Adams and colleagues demonstrated that by mixing metham with irrigation water and saturating the fields, less fungicide was needed to improve yields.

"Lettuce drop can be a problem wherever lettuce is grown in the United States," said Adams. The fungus Sclerotinia minor attacks and blocks the stem at ground level, preventing water and nutrients from reaching the lettuce leaves. They wilt and the plant literally drops to the ground.

Since the fungus thrives on lettuce, plowing disease plants into the field can increase the number of disease-producing organisms in the soil. Therefore, lettuce growers minimize losses by plant-

ing lettuce in the same field only once every three to five years.

Growers also fumigate lettuce fields two weeks before planting to kill any fungus that remains in the soil. A gaseous fungicide like DD mixture (a mixture of chlorinated three-carbon hydrocarbons) is "shanked-in"—pumped into the soil through an eight-inch spike or shank that is dragged through the field.

The new method of fungicide application by Adams

is efficient and low in cost, but it requires a good water supply. Any type of conventional sprinkler irrigation system can be used to apply the fungicide, said Adams.

"Simply mix metham into the irrigation water and saturate the soil until it is wet to a depth of eight inches. This usually takes about four hours," he said.

Because it is simple, the new method will undoubtedly be used in

greenhouses to apply metham to produce disease-free seedlings, Adams noted.

Research plans for metham application by irrigation include studies of its effectiveness in controlling other plant diseases such as Verticillium wilt of potatoes, damping-off fungi, and white rot of onions, as well as controlling other pests, like weeds and nematodes.

## York County seeks princess contestants

YORK — York County's dairy industry is seeking the young lady who will be crowned their first lady of milk promotion, the 1981 York County Dairy Princess.

Contestants for the Dairy Princess crown will take part in the annual pageant, scheduled for Friday, June 19, at the Wisheaven Hall. The winner will represent York County at the state pageant in Harrisburg on September 21 and 22.

Entrants in the York County

competition must meet the following requirements:

- live in York County;
- be the daughter of a dairy farmer, dairy farm manager, herdsman or dairy farm owner during the current year, or be the owner of more than one dairy animal prior to May 1, 1981;
- have completed her junior year of high school, but not reached her 22nd birthday by December 31, 1981;
- must be single and never

married; cannot marry during her reign;

- must have her parent's or guardian's consent;
- must attend the training seminar July 13 to 15, 1981;
- former local winners are not eligible;
- must give a one to three minute presentation or radio spot at the pageant.

Entry forms are due May 1, and can be obtained from June Boyer, 110 Biesecker Road, York, or by calling 717/225-5240.



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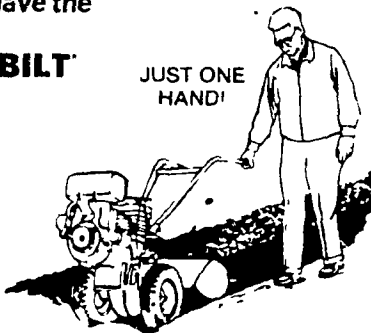
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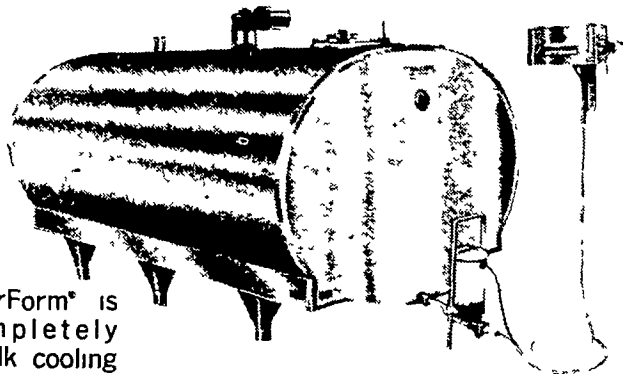
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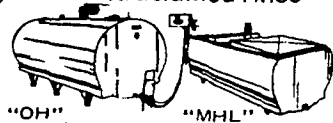
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