

Blackbird damage to corn less than farmers assume

WILLIAMSPORT — Blackbird damage to Pennsylvania corn fields averages less than 1 bushel per acre for over 86 percent of crops examined in a recent study, according to wildlife scientists at Penn State University.

James Wakeley and Robert Mitchell of Penn State's College of Agriculture examined 288 randomly selected cornfields in the Commonwealth. They found that blackbird damage generally is not as severe as farmers may assume.

Statewide, 62 percent of the sampled fields contained some damaged ears. Wakeley and Mitchell estimated the total loss to be about 630,000 bushels, worth over \$1.4 million.

"Certain farms, at the same time, can sustain severe losses," Wakeley stated. "Five of the farms we sampled lost more than five bushels per acre, and one farm lost an estimated 17.6 bushels per acre to blackbirds."

When asked on a questionnaire to estimate their dollar losses from blackbirds, 479 growers in an earlier study said damages averaged \$482 per farm. In this study, damage was estimated to affect some 11,910 Pennsylvania farms. Thus, total damage from blackbirds would be over \$5.7 million.

"The latter figure is more than four times the estimated dollar loss based on field sampling," Wakeley commented. "It indicates that growers tend to overestimate the magnitude of the bird-damage problem."

In 1979, the average corn yield in Pennsylvania was 95 bushels per acre for a total production of 115,425,000 bushels, according to the Pennsylvania Crop Reporting Service. Bird-caused losses of grain amounted to less than 1 percent of the final reported yield.

Similar studies in Kentucky and Tennessee — and Ontario, Canada — found that bird damage to corn averaged less than 1 percent of the yield.

On most farms, normal harvesting losses greatly exceed bird-caused damage. Some studies have shown that mechanical pickers and corn combines lose three to eight bushels per acre.

The Penn State study will be published in the Spring of "Science in Agriculture," the quarterly magazine of the Agricultural Experiment Station at University Park.

While methods to control blackbirds are available. Wakeley

and Mitchell said relatively few corn growers in Pennsylvania would benefit from using them. Nonetheless, they describe one control device as an acetylene or propane-powered exploder used to frighten blackbirds. The other technique is a repellent known as Avitrol Corn Chops-99.

When the study was made, the cost of exploders ranged from about \$175 to \$625, depending upon the model and optional features desired.

A single exploder may be effective over a 10-acre area. The cost of fuel was about \$15 to \$30 per season.

"If used over a number of years, growers with as little as \$5 to \$6 per acre damage, about 2.5 bushels per acre, might benefit," Dr. Wakeley noted. "About five percent of Pennsylvania corn growers, on some 1400 farms, are in this category."

As for the repellent, a single application by helicopter cost \$7.25

per acre at the time of the study. According to the label, as many as three to four applications may be needed during the growing season if damage is severe.

Even if Avitrol were completely effective, few corn growers in Pennsylvania could justify its use, Wakeley observed.

The project is supported by U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service funds and by Fair Funds administered by the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture.

Angus heifer sets Canadian sales record

LACOMBE, Alberta — Stivers Angus of Pittstown, New Jersey and Moltzahn Angus of Bashaw, Alberta, Canada, announce Canadian record for the sale of an Angus female.

Here the 21st Annual Cross Country Sale, Stivers Angus bought Classy Lass MG 9'80, February heifer, from the William Moltzahn family for \$50,000. It was

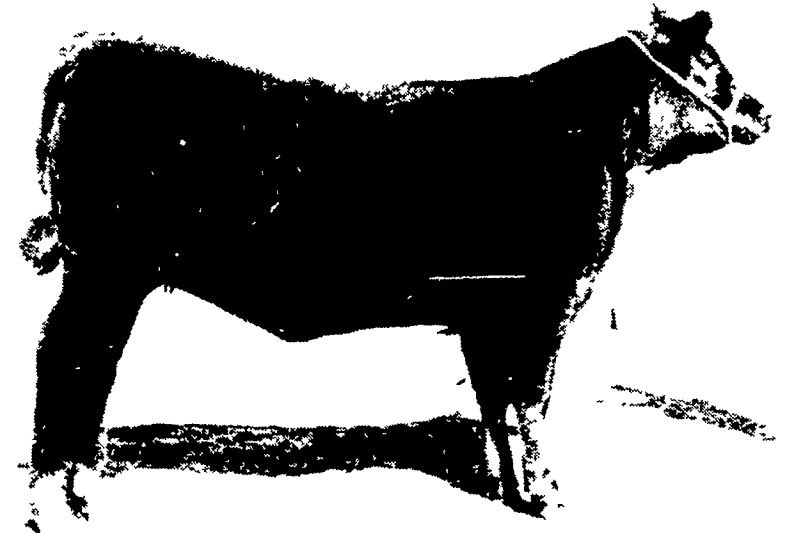
the highest price ever paid in Canada for an Angus female.

Classy Lass was included at the last minute on sale day, by popular demand, as a special added lot. Her sire, Sir Wms Warpum, had been sold only moments earlier at the same sale for \$150,000, another Canadian record.

Her dam, Eileemere Lass MG

99'77, had set the previous Canadian record female price last fall when Stivers Angus purchased her for \$30,000 during the Moltzahn Angus 1980 Production Sale.

Both outstanding females may be seen on Saturday, July 25, at the New Jersey Angus Association Field Day to be held at Stivers Angus in Pittstown.



Classy Lass MG 9'80, a February heifer, brought \$50,000 to set a Canadian sales record recently.

USDA eliminates payments on 1980 corn, sorghum

WASHINGTON, D.C. — The U.S. Department of Agriculture will make no deficiency payments on the 1980 crops of corn and sorghum, according to Edward Hews, acting administrator of USDA's Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service.

Under current legislation, deficiency payments are made to producers when the average market price received by farmers during the first five months of the marketing year (October through

February) is less than the established "target" price.

The national weighted average price received by farmers during the October 1980 through February 1981 period was \$3.11 per bushel for corn and \$3.04 per bushel for sorghum.

Since these prices are above the 1980 target price of \$2.35 per bushel for corn and \$2.50 per bushel for sorghum, no deficiency payments are required, Hews said.

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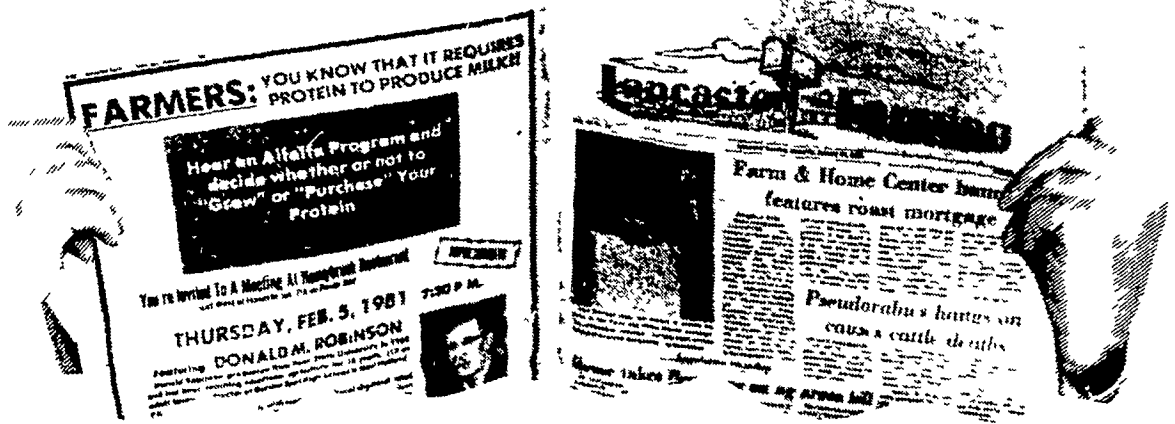
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