

Rain limits fieldwork

HARRISBURG — Scattered thunderstorms and showers held farm fieldwork to only two days in the Commonwealth during the week ending June 8. Rain fall amounts ranged from 0.34 inches in the Philadelphia area to 2.5 inches in some northern mountains, according to the Pennsylvania Crop Reporting Service.

Farm field activities included planting of corn, soybeans, tomatoes, snap beans and tobacco; harvesting hay and haylage; and spraying alfalfa and fruit trees.

Strawberries are ripening, and early harvest has begun. Green peas are reported to be doing well.

Statewide soil moisture was rated as 65 percent adequate, 33 percent surplus and two percent short. Soil moisture was rated as 62 percent adequate and 38 percent surplus in northern counties, 63 percent adequate and 37 percent surplus in central counties, and 71 percent adequate, 22 percent surplus and seven percent short in central counties.

Corn planting is 90 percent complete statewide, compared to 92 percent for both last year and the five-year average. Planting is now 87 percent complete in the north, 93 percent complete in central counties and 92 percent complete in the south. Corn height averages four inches statewide, on a par with last year.

Soybeans are now 59 percent planted, compared to 66 percent planted last year. Northern county soybeans are now 66 percent planted while the central and southern counties report 60 and 52 percent planted, respectively. Tobacco transplanting is 48 percent complete, ahead of last year's 32 percent.

Barley is now 75 percent headed and seven percent turning yellow, compared to last year's 81 percent headed and three percent turning. Central counties report 95 percent headed and less than five percent turning, while the barley in nor-

thern counties is 47 percent headed and six percent turning. Southern barley fields are reported as 83 percent headed and 17 percent turning.

The state's wheat crop is now 64 percent headed, below last year's 70 percent. Southern wheat is now 88 percent headed, while wheat in central and northern counties is reported at 71 and 35 percent headed, respectively.

First cutting of alfalfa is now 29

percent complete statewide, compared to 33 percent last year at this time. First cutting is now 50 percent complete in the south, 20 percent in central counties and 18 percent in the north.

First cutting of clover-timothy hay is eight percent harvested, below the 13 percent cut last year. Harvest of first cutting clover-timothy stands at 17 percent in the south, seven percent in central

counties and five percent in the north.

Hay quality for the week was mostly poor to fair. In the northern counties hay was rated 33 percent poor, 33 percent fair and 34 percent good. Hay quality in central counties was rated 67 percent poor, 22 percent fair and 11 percent good, while southern hay quality was rated as 30 percent poor, 40 percent fair, and 30 percent good.

Feed from pastures was rated as

average across the state, with northern farm operators reporting pastures as 91 percent average and nine percent above average. Central pastures were rated as 71 percent average and 29 percent above average, while southern pastures were rated 89 percent average and 11 percent above average.

Cabbage growers are reporting some cutworm damage to their crop.

Farm real estate prices slow down

UNIVERSITY PARK — Real estate prices for Pennsylvania farm land increased at less than half the average rate of inflation last year, according to Frederick A. Hughes, Extension farm management specialist at Penn State.

On the average it cost \$73 more to buy an acre of Pennsylvania farm land this year than did in 1980. This represents a 5 percent increase, compared to an 11 percent inflation rate.

Last year's 5 percent looks good when compared to the 308 percent increase from 1970-80 — an average of 30.8 percent per year.

The average value per acre for Pennsylvania farm land in February was \$1443 compared to \$1370 last year. Nationwide the average increase in value per acre was only 9.3 percent, the smallest increase in three years and the second smallest in 10 years.

Hughes says several factors have contributed to the slowdown in land price increases including lower net farm income, higher interest rates, and tight money.

Net farm income fell from \$31 billion in 1979 to \$22 billion in 1980. At the same time interest rates hit record highs in 1980 as the prime rate climbed to 20 percent in April, dropped to 11 percent in July and then jumped to 21.5 percent in

December. These high interest rates and tight money have made it difficult to borrow money for mortgages.

Hughes says much farm land is already overpriced in terms of the

income that can be generated to meet the interest payments on a mortgage. Higher interest rates make the problem more acute. Moreover, if farms for sale need major renovations to buildings, it is difficult for a buyer to obtain

additional capital and generate adequate income to meet payments.

This situation makes it extremely difficult for young farmers buying their first farm.

Tips to improve mowing manners

MEDIA — What piece of yard equipment causes loss of fingers and toes, and puncture injuries from flying objects? The lawn mower! It helps most in keeping your property beautiful but it also causes 75,000 accidents each year in the United States.

Here are some suggestions to prevent accidents offered by James J. McKeehen, Delaware County Agricultural Agent;

1. Keep your mower clean and in good running condition.
2. Pick up toys, stones, sticks, wire and bones before you start mowing.
3. Keep people and pets away from an operating mower.
4. Mow across embankments, never up or down.
5. Never leave the engine running while mower is unattended.
6. When starting the engine, stand away from the mower; make

sure your feet cannot contact the whirling blade.

7. Run only fast enough to obtain a good, clean cut. Extremely high blade speeds are dangerous and cause excess mower wear.

8. If the mower travel is powered, adjust its speed to your speed. Never let the mower pull you.

9. Store and handle gas safely. Do not fill tank while engine is hot.

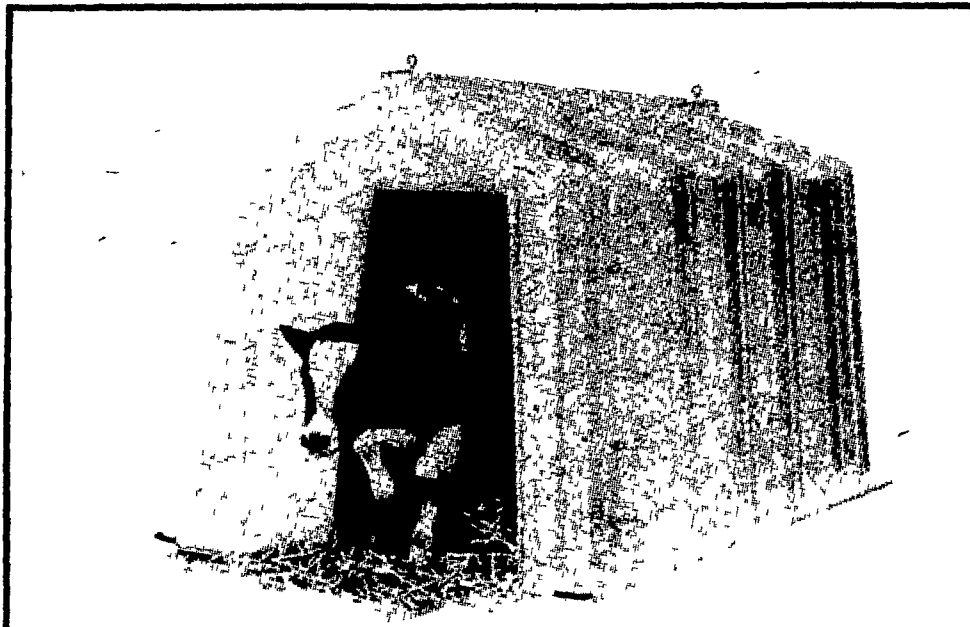
10. If the mower becomes clogged, stop engine and disconnect spark plug wire before unclogging the blade.

11. Do not operate electric mowers on wet ground. You will be in danger if the cord is cut or if the mower has a short circuit.

12. Always turn off an electric mower and disconnect the cord when you leave it.

13. Riding mowers present the same problems as push type mowers. Follow the same rules for both types and do not allow extra riders.

Using a power mower is not a job for children. Only a person familiar with the mower should operate it. Don't be an accident waiting to happen.



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