

# City sprawl

(Continued from Page C24)

micro-climates, Gray said, "If you lose those places you're not going to grow oranges in Kansas."

Changing population patterns have increased the pressure on farmland. The nation has more, smaller families, and many of them are heading for a home in the country.

"Over 40 percent of housing constructed during the 1970s was built in rural areas," the study reported, adding that 12 million new households are expected in non-metropolitan areas between 1977 and 1995.

As people move farther from city centers, they take up more space.

Thomas J. Barlow of the Natural Resources Defense Council cited Minnesota's Twin Cities metropolitan region: the first million residents occupied about 180 square miles of land, but the second million took up an additional 550 square miles. When the area gets its third million, probably by 1990, they'll occupy an extra 1,600 square miles—almost 10 times as much land per capita as the first million. "The pattern applies to many cities," he said.

The arrival of new residents in rural areas can set off a chain of events. The need arises for government services such as sewer, water, police, and school. So does the value of the land, and often so do taxes. That can be decisive. As Mrs. Franklin said, "We are just taxed out of Fairtax

County."

Other conflicts can arise, as Rawlins of the milk co-op noted. "People seeking the bucolic life and loveliness of the countryside will move right alongside a farm, and all of a sudden they'll discover there are odors they never had in the city," he said. Those people may file suit against the farmer or get local government to restrict farming practices.

As farms disappear from an area, so do farm equipment and supply stores. Remaining farmers may fall into what the agricultural lands study calls the "impermanence syndrome". Seeing the approach of urbanization, they figure there's no long-range future in their farms and they stop practicing soil conservation or making needed repairs.

Uncle Sam shares in the blame for the loss of farmlands, it seems. The NALS named about 90 federal programs "that contribute to the conversion of agricultural land," prime among them ones run by the Department of Housing and Urban Development, the Farmers Home Administration, and the Economic Development Administration. The study found that only two federal agencies—the Environmental Protection Agency and the USDA—have policies to consider the effect of their programs on farmland.

The study calls for a federal policy on agricultural lands, and says that the government shouldn't

help pay for development of good farmland but should offer incentives such as lower interest rates to encourage development elsewhere.

Yet the protection of farmland is largely up to states and local governments, the NALS adds. Some steps already have been taken. Forty-eight states—all but Georgia and Kansas—offer some form of property tax relief for farmers. Sixteen have adopted "right-to-farm" legislation that protects farmers from nuisance lawsuits and from local ordinances restricting normal farm practices.

Other efforts to protect farmland include voluntary agricultural districts; agricultural zoning, adopted by Hawaii and 270 local governments; the purchase or transfer of development rights on farmland; and comprehensive management plans.

All these efforts cost money, of course—but not saving farmlands will cost even more, asserts Gray of the American Farmland Trust. "It costs the farmer more to produce on marginal land," he said. "He has to put more fertilizer on, and it's more difficult for drainage, so prices for food would have to be much higher or farmers couldn't stay in business. If people think they're paying a lot for food now, let them see what they'd be paying then."

# Avoid summer food poisoning

**PENN STATE** — When your stomach does flip-flops and you think you have a virus, it's just possible that "virus" is food poisoning.

Food poisoning can happen anywhere — including your own kitchen. Each year more than 2 million cases of bacterial food poisoning occur in the United States.

Only when food spoils can we tell something is wrong, and many food poisoning bacteria don't change the taste, smell or looks of the food.

Extension food scientists at The Pennsylvania State University say that by following three basic rules you can control, stop, or destroy the bacteria that causes food poisoning:

- Keep hot food hot.
- Keep cold food cold.
- Keep food clean.

Keeping food hot means cooking food thoroughly, serving it promptly, and fully reheating stored foods. Keeping food clean means avoiding unsanitary practices that contaminate food.

Frozen food should be thawed, still fully wrapped, in the refrigerator or under cold water. Keep your refrigerator at 35 to 40°F and your freezer at 0°. Germs on food simply don't multiply very fast at those temperatures.

Always wash everything that comes in contact with uncooked or raw food with soap and water — including your hands.

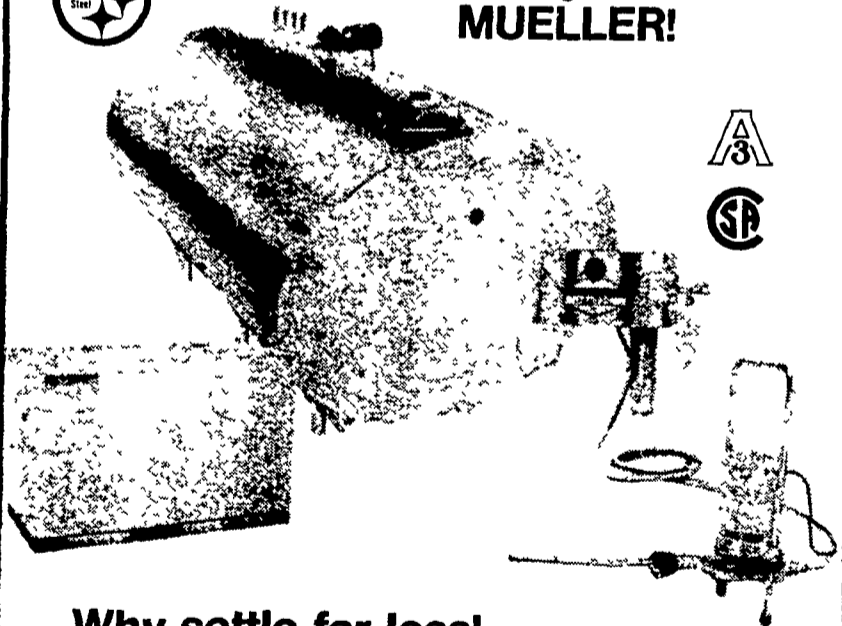
When preparing meat or poultry salads, chill all the ingredients thoroughly. After mixing a salad, put it in shallow containers to remove the heat produced in preparation and to allow rapid chilling. Then refrigerate.

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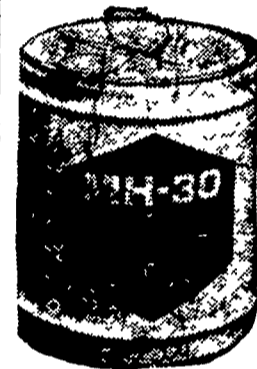
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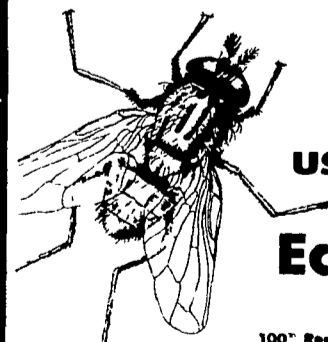
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