

Now is the Time

(Continued from Page A10)

farm homes have this protection. I would suggest that you evaluate this investment during this winter when the weather gets really bad. Then, next spring the plantings can be made.

To Check Stand-By Generators

The winter season brings with it snow and ice storms that can damage and knock out our supply of electricity. Most farms are badly crippled without electricity so the need for a stand-by generator is recognized. I know that many poultry farms in particular, already have this equipment.

However, if the generator is not in good working condition, it may not do the job in case of an emergency. These generators should be run once a week to reassure yourself that it's in good running condition. If it is a tractor hook-up type, then take the time to make that connection each week. When the power goes off, you don't have time to run tests on the equipment to make sure it's in proper working order.

To Eliminate Feed Waste

Feed costs are one of the major items in the production of meat and milk on most farms. Under today's market conditions, it is very important to keep feed costs to a minimum.

In the case of cattle and hogs, if any money is to be made, it has to be made on the cost of gains rather than on the margin between first cost and selling price. Therefore, the less feed the animals eat per

WASHINGTON, D.C. — "The cattle cycle is an economic disease. We spend millions on animal diseases. How much do we spend on the real income killer, the cattle cycle? We view the cattle cycle like death and taxes as inevitable. I deny this. Cycles are predictable and their causes well known. Through research and education they could essentially be eradicated."

Willard Williams, professor of agricultural economics at Texas Tech, made this statement in 1975, but he could — and would — say it again today. In the past, cattle cycles have caused tremendous fluctuations in beef supplies, prices, and the value of cattle inventories. In fact, during the last decade, some producers saw the value of their herds cut almost in half when the cycle turned from expansion to the sharpest liquidation in history.

The cattle industry is now in a rebuilding phase of the eighth cycle since someone started counting back in 1896. So, the question for the eighties is: Must the traditional pattern of overoptimism, overexpansion, and huge producer losses repeat in this decade?

Economics such as Williams and USDA's Richard Crom contend cattle cycles can be better controlled. According to Crom, producers themselves, armed with accurate market information and knowledge of how to react to in-

pound of gain, or pound of milk, the better it will be for the owner. In many cases feed is being wasted.

Cracks or holes in feed troughs and feed bunks, are sure to waste feed. Improper adjustment of feeders, will waste feed. Check your feeding equipment and be sure the feed is being consumed, not wasted.

How does the cattle cycle work?

dustry trends, could help flatten out the peaks and valleys of production cycles.

"This is a real possibility now," says Crom, "because producers are more management-oriented and production units are larger."

Management followup is the key because information alone is just not enough. One industry expert cites the early seventies as a prime example of this. High prices and reduced slaughter, as more cattle were held for herd expansion, led many producers to ignore the basic data on total cow numbers. Even many cautious producers kept expanding. Ultimately, they suffered huge losses because record cattle and cow numbers, coupled with drought-reduced forage supplies, finally forced a record liquidation.

How the Cycle Works

There's no simple explanation of how the cattle cycle begins, but let's say it starts with the expansion phase. Heifers that normally would have been marketed are held back by producers and added to breeding herds. Additional cattle are put on feed.

Thus, slaughter is reduced, and beef supplies become more limited. Prices then increase for slaughter cattle and also for breeding stock and feeders. Each increase stimulates more expansion. Retail prices climb because of limited supplies.

Finally, cattle numbers become so large that increased slaughter is unavoidable. Prices fall. If producers panic and rush to sell, the market is glutted with beef and prices drop severely.

Eventually, marketings decline and prices improve for cattlemen. Then, the expansion phase of the cycle takes over again.

One key factor in the cycle is beef biology. Quick reactions to

market signals are impossible because so much time is involved in the reproduction of cattle. So, biology alone is a big factor in the length of the cycles, which have run about 10 years each during the past three decades.

For cattle producers, the time it takes for a calf to reach market weight and the market prices received are important considerations in management. "But if these internal factors were the only ones affecting cattle numbers, the degree of income adjustment for producers would be relatively minor," says Crom.

"It's the outside forces — inflation, weather, exports, consumer spending, and feed prices — that can lead to major herd liquidation and trouble."

"Back in the seventies, just about everything went wrong," says Crom. "The unprecedented rate of inflation during the early part of the decade had a dramatic effect on input prices. Grain and energy costs more than doubled. Increased foreign demand for feed grains tightened domestic supplies."

"And on top of that, a severe (Turn to Page A39)

Farm Calendar

(Continued from Page A10)

Wednesday, Nov. 11

Delmarva Poultry Short Course, 7:30 p.m., Georgetown Substation.

Adams County Poultry Appreciation Banquet, 6:30 p.m., Cashtown Fire Hall.

Hunterdon County, N.J. Ag Development Board, 8 p.m., Extension Center, Flemington, N.J.

Gas Lease Update meeting, 7:30 p.m., Big Springs High School, Newville.

Bradford County Extension NEBA annual meeting, 7:45 p.m., North Orwell Community Hall.

Huntingdon County DHIA annual meeting, 7:30 p.m., Juniata Valley High School.

Thursday, Nov. 12

Wayne County Extension Annual Meeting, 7:45 p.m., Pleasant Valley Grange Hall

York Farm Credit Stockholders Meeting, Embers, Carlisle.

Adams Ag Area Organization Meeting, 7:30 p.m., Gettysburg Sr. High School.

Chester County DHIA Annual Meeting, 7 p.m., East Brandywine Fire Hall, Guthriesville.

Friday, Nov. 13

Lancaster County Guernsey Breeders Annual Meeting, 7 p.m., Refton Fire Hall.

Lebanon Sheep to Shawl Contest, Lebanon Plaza Mall, 6:30 p.m.

Penn State Ag Service School, Embers, Carlisle.

Berks Club Calf and Heifer Sale, 7 p.m., Leesport Auction.

Saturday, Nov. 14

AKC dog trials, Farm Show Building.

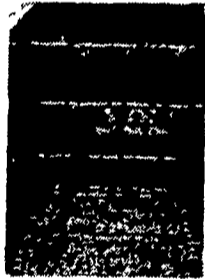
Central Pa. Ayrshire Club Annual Meeting, 1 p.m., home of Carl Sweinhart, Rt. 1, New Enterprise.

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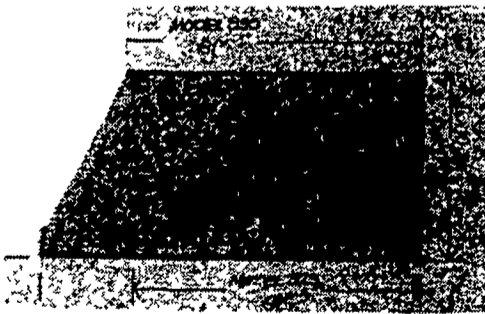
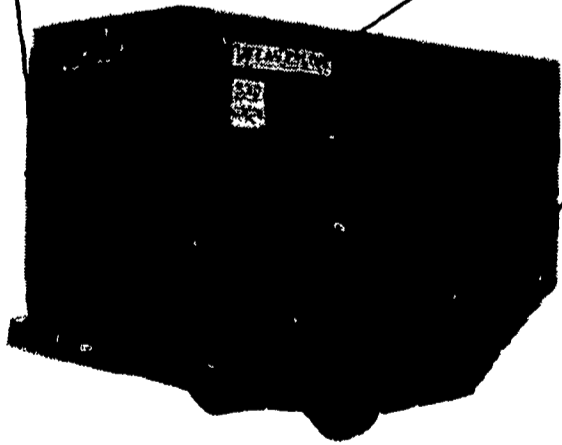
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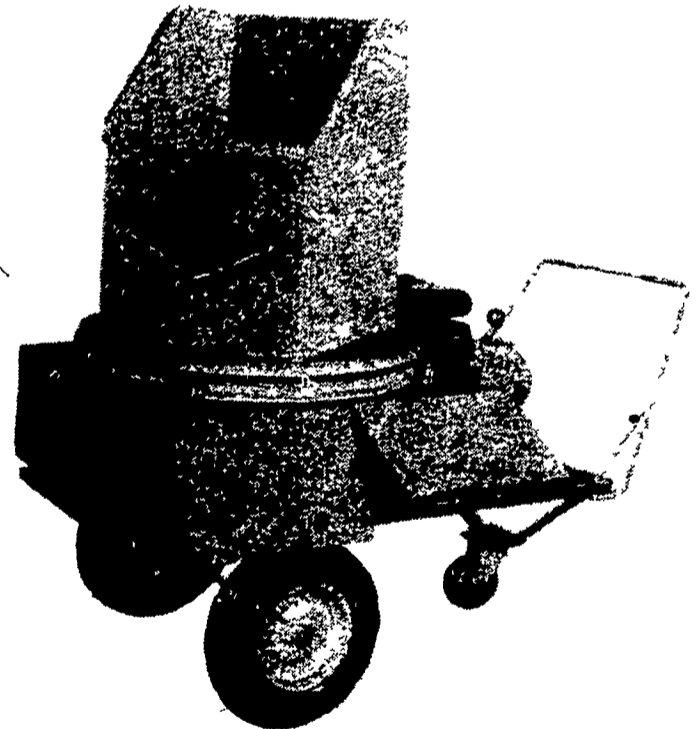
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