

# The Milk Check

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### The Worm Turns

All during 1981 you've been looking at farm prices in Order 2 that didn't change except for seasonal differentials and incentives that were traded off between the spring and fall. In fact, the blend prices actually dropped from \$13.46 in January to \$13.41 in December. But, at least, they were always higher than the same month in 1980.

Now even that has changed, and the blend price in Order 2 in December and January were less than a year ago. The \$13.41 in December 1981 was three cents less than a year ago and the \$13.35 blend for January was 11 cents less than January. The worm has finally turned, but not in your favor.

It really wasn't hard to see it coming and it was only a matter of time when it would catch up with you. Looking at the Minnesota-Wisconsin price series during 1981, it fell from a high of \$12.67 in March to a low of \$12.56 in December. Just the fact that it peaked in the Spring tells you something of the unusual condition of the market.

Now you have an M-W price in January 1982 of \$12.55 that's nine cents lower than a year ago. The M-W is critical because that's what determines your Class prices which have fallen right along with the M-W.

Of course, there's more to your blend price than the M-W and the Class prices. Equally important is the mix of milk uses in the market known as the Class 1 utilization expressed as a percent of all the milk in the pool.

In 1981, this too contributed to lower blend prices as total

production went up over three percent dropping your blend price even further. Last year's summary information for Order 2 will probably show the third consecutive year of record low. Class 1 utilization around 42 percent largely reflecting increasing production.

### January Pool

As I said, the January blend price in Order 2 was \$13.35 for 3.5 test milk at the 201-210 mile zone. That was six cents less than December and 11 cents less than last January. Your Class prices were \$14.77 and \$12.58, making Class 1 the same as December and the same as last January.

The Class 1 price at \$12.58 was four cents less than December and nine cents less than last January. Your average daily production was up three per cent over December sending an additional 870,000 pounds a day into the market. Class 1 sales held steady at 12.8 million pounds a day but the increased production sent your Class 1 utilization down to 43.1 percent a drop of 1.3 percent from December and 1.8 percent less than last January.

So, all the statistics in the December and January pools only reinforce the trend toward lower blend prices in Order 2 coming mainly from increasing production and a lower Class 1 utilization which has been going on for three years.

In the past you had the help of the price support program that increased Class prices but that ended in 1981. Now the increasing production is lowering the blend

# No-till equipment is not total conservation story

HARRISBURG — Farmers did less plowing in 1981 than in previous years, but the result has not necessarily reduced soil erosion, according to a conservation official.

"The practice of no-till farming, or planting in soil that is not plowed, increased by about 15 percent in 1981," states John Spitzer of the USDA Soil Conservation Service.

Proper use of conservation tillage such as no-till farming can reduce soil losses by up to 80 percent, he reports. The conservation practice increase was listed in the annual report of SCS soil and water conservation accomplishments in Pennsylvania compiled from information provided by SCS field offices located in most counties.

According to Spitzer, one of every six acres planted in 1981 was planted by some type of reduced tillage method. These reduced tillage methods are generally

price below last year and will continue to drop until October or until production and/or consumption trends are reversed.

recognized as conserving soil and water resources.

"However," emphasizes Spitzer, "this is not the case. Plant residue cover on the surface soil is the key to preventing erosion. Many farmers are moving corn stover and other plant residues for cattle feed and bedding, leaving the soil bare over winter. The result is excessive soil erosion."

"At least 2,000 pounds per acre of plant residue must be left on the surface soil after planting or over winter for effective erosion control."

SCS data showed that farmers planted 245,000 acres using no-till methods, along with 264,000 acres of conservation tillage in 1981. In both practices, adequate soil cover was left on the land. On another 440,000 acres, some form of minimum tillage was practiced, but less than 2,000 pounds of cover remained, leaving the soil open to erosion.

A recent Dauphin Conservation District study reported that 81 percent of the reduced tillage with disc and chisel plows was ineffective for erosion control due to removal of surface plant residues.

"On a good corn crop, about 75 percent of the cornstalks should be left to have adequate cover of plant residue," notes Spitzer.

"Secretary of Agriculture John Block proposed an increased use of no-till and other reduced tillage methods as a cost effective way to reduce the nation's 5.33 million tons of annual soil loss. To be effective, farmers must understand that ground cover, not the tillage method, is the key to reducing soil erosion," stresses Spitzer.

Technical help is available for farmers considering or expanding the use of conservation tillage. Farmers should direct inquiries to SCS or Cooperative Extension Service personnel in their counties.



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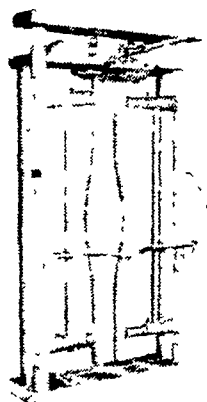
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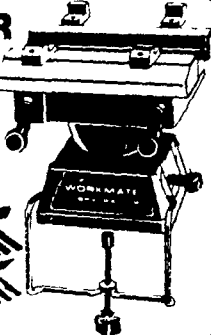
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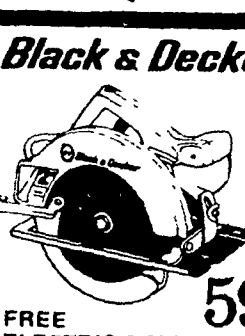
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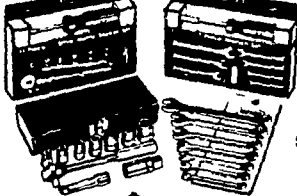
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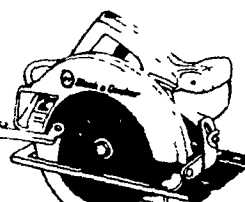
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