

By  
Newton Bair

**THE SPRING FLUSH**

Abe Hess was born and raised on one of the fine, productive farms along the Yellow Breeches Creek in York County. He also operated the old homestead for many years, finally retiring to a more modest estate where he lived well into his nintieth year. Being of thrifty Pennsylvania Dutch stock, he lived and died a moderately wealthy man.

One of Abram's favorite tales of his dairying experience was about "Calico" a three-colored cow. Whether her red, white and black hide was responsible for her behavior and performance is not too important. She was also unusual in other ways.

Calico was the herd leader, not so much the 'boss' type as the pace setter. She had a characteristic sometimes seen in animals that lets them sense just when things should be done, whether the dumb owner is aware of it or not. Like the night the herd broke into the corn field and Calico displayed her loyalty by bawling loudly right under the bedroom window to alert the hired man of the impending disaster. Like Ada the Ayrshire,

she was always the first one through the pasture gate, always found the choicest spot to graze and the coolest shade to rest. And no other critter dared to challenge her.

But spring time was the time for really showing her true colors. Calico always went dry in January, when the hay was scarce and corn fodder became the main diet. There must have been enough vitamins in her, corn, oats and bran to allow her to survive the winter, since she wasn't working anyway. She always calved in April, just when the bluegrass meadow was at its greenest.

Abe loved to tell how old Calico would 'run the bucket over' at milking time. Of course, all the cows responded to the stimulation of fresh, green spring pasture after a winter diet of corn fodder, but old Cal always had things timed right. She picked the best time to get pregnant, so she could rest all winter, and have her baby just when the best feed and most comfortable shade were abundant.

Now, lots of cows have this same desire to get romantic in May or June, stand dry in mid winter and

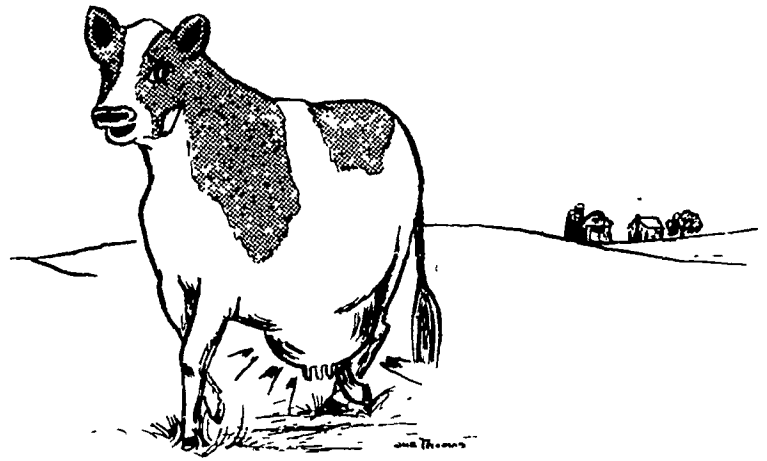
freshen when the pasture is lush and green. In Abe's time it didn't matter too much because he sold his cream to a plant that made butter in winter and ice cream in summer. The skim milk was fed to the pigs, which were the real winners in the food chain. Things are somewhat different today.

In spite of our modern techniques of better heat detection, controlled breeding, balanced nutrition and expensive housing, nature still has the upper hand in dictating when our nation's cows will produce the most milk. Springtime is still the time of "flush production". We've come a long way since 'ole Calico's day, when most of the milk was produced in the summer months, but the natural tendencies are still there. The spring flush of milk is not compatible with the year-round demand created by our marketing system.

All dairy managers will be seriously addressing this and other production problems in the near future. We are now at the peak of not only the Spring Flush, but this time it has become an all-time deluge of milk. Dairying has prospered as it has in no other time in history, and we are indeed a land flowing with Milk and Honey. (Yes, the beekeepers have done well too, in terms of over-production). Can such a blessing be sustained, or will it become a curse?

The 'Spring Flush', symbolized by Abe Hess's old Calico cow who 'run the bucket over', is also symbolic of our present situation. The thing that is different, is that we now know how to sustain the flood of milk all year. It won't automatically go away next winter.

We do have several things going for us that Abe didn't, however. We have a growing population of people to use our product. We have

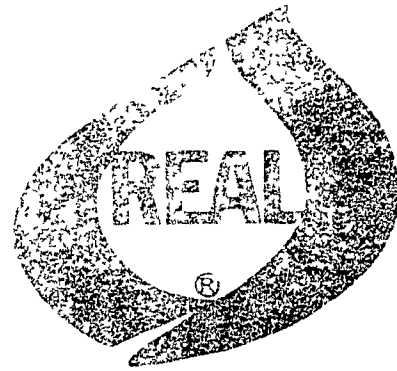


This Spring Flush every year concerns me, too.

a better product to sell. We have the means to advertize, package and deliver a multitude of high quality dairy products to the buyer. And we have all of the mechanics to compete with phony floods and fads that are tricking the public palate. We have the means to Cooperate, if we keep our Coopertives strong. If we don't use these mechanisms seriously and

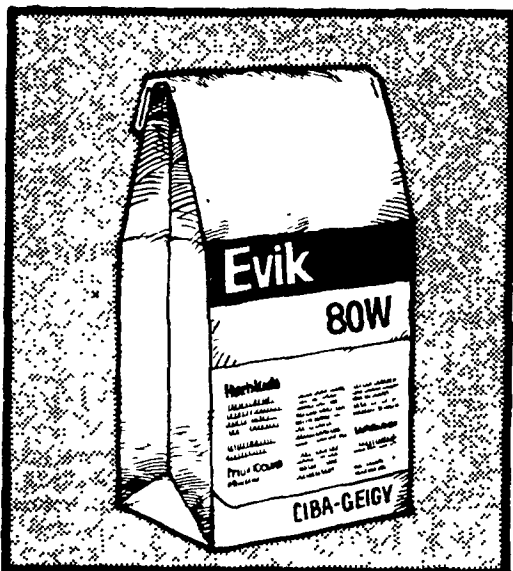
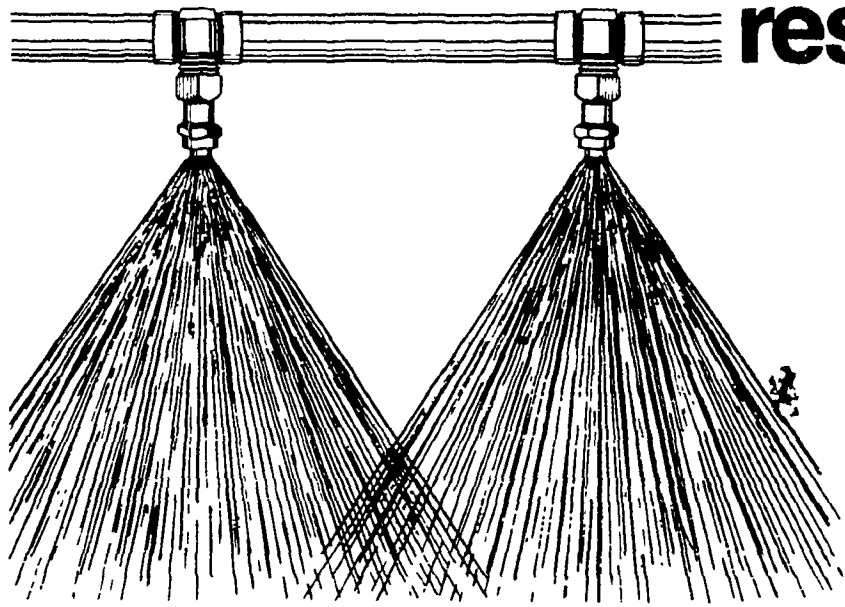
energetically and soon, we may find the Dairy Business sinking in a sea of milk.

Learn a lesson from Old Calico. She was a little bit of a renegade, but she was also a leader. She knew how to take advantage of the seasons, and in any situation her ultimate goal was cooperation with her mates, and her owner and benefactor.



**Evik<sup>®</sup>**

**A burndown residual herbicide that's ideal for your PIK acres**



Evik<sup>®</sup> trademark of CIBA-GEIGY

Evik does everything you want a herbicide to do on idle PIK acres.

Evik gives you options you can't get with other herbicides.

- Like low cost.
- Burndown of weeds up to six inches high.
- Limited residual control, so you can plant small grains in the fall.

Ask us about Evik for weed control on your PIK acres.

**Evik Available Through  
Your Local Dealer  
or Custom Applicator**