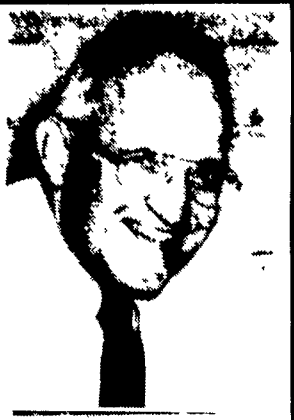


The Milk Check

TOM JURCHAK
County Agent



Signs of Spring

Most farmers in this area would say that the signs of Spring have not been good. In fact there have been inquiries on procedures for impeaching the weatherman but milk market wise it hasn't been all that bad. True, you have to look closely for improvements and I've already been warned against making the situation look better than it is. But we've waited so long for some of these signs during our "winter of discontent" that any good news, no matter how small, is "as welcome as the flowers, ect".

However, not all the news is good and the weather is a problem especially in a year when it will be important to have high quality forage to cut feed costs. And whenever corn planting starts to compete with hay cutting it's usually the hay quality that suffers. Also, lots of acres in corn, whether here or in the mid west, can help to keep feed prices down for milk producers next winter.

Sign-ups for diverting feed grain acres were about as disappointing as the Milk Diversion Program and early signs pointed to a near record crop of corn this year. Nationally, only 29 percent of the farms participated in the corn

program with only 53 percent of the total base acreage. The base acreage represents less than 50 percent of the total corn acres and only a 10 percent reduction was needed to participate. There was no charge from last year in the \$3.03 target price for corn or the \$2.55 loan rate so, evidently, producers were willing to gamble on the weather and the market.

Planting intentions now indicate nearly 82 million acres in corn next year (compared to 60 million in 1983) so we could be looking at a crop to break the 1982 record. However, the future's market for corn is at \$3.00 a bushel for December deliveries and while that's a lot better than the \$3.45 in July it really doesn't sound like cheap feed next winter. The bottom line, of course, as we learned last year, is that from planting to harvest the weatherman takes precedence over the Congressman.

More Signs

Closer to milk marketing, the signs of Spring showed a decline in production but not in all areas. However, it was enough to start moving milk away from manufacturing plants to fluid markets at a time of the year when it should be going the other way. Up to April 12 this year 143 loads

were shipped out of Wisconsin compared to 22 last year and 112 in 1982. January milk production broke a 56 month record with no increases over the same month a year ago. February provided the first drop of 1.8 percent below February 1983 allowing for the extra day in leap year. March production nearly doubled that drop with three percent less than last March.

The big cuts, however, are coming in the southeast and southwest where the Milk Diversion Program sign-ups were the highest. Minnesota, Wisconsin and Pennsylvania had cuts of five, two and one percent while California and New York were up two percent in March. All of this is reflected in reduced Commodity Credit Corporation purchases of dairy products which have been dropping every month this year so far compared to a year ago. The total purchases since October 1 to April 25 were 7.5 billion pounds of milk equivalent which was 26 percent less than the same period last year. Most encouraging was the flow of dairy products through the marketing pipeline.

With processors confident of stable support prices for the rest of the year inventories were built up and sales were increasing. Some of that increase in sales was due to improving economic conditions giving consumers more spendable income. Lower dairy product prices made them a food bargain again and consumers responded with increased purchases. That same increase in consumer disposable income put a demand pull on beef prices and kept cull cow prices up at the farm.

As a result, dairymen have sent 93,000 more cows to market so far this year than the Milk Diversion Program participants indicated in their diversion plans. Of course, not all of these culls are coming from participant herds. Total beef

production had been up four percent in January and February over last year with pork up 10 percent; veal up 15 percent and lamb up 11 percent so the better prices must be due to increased demand.

Future beef production is expected to drop below last year levels in the second quarter of this year and average two percent less for 1984. Hog numbers will be the lowest since 1976. This should mean continuing better prices for cull cows and what many producers view as the best cure for low milk prices. It might even get some livestock producers out of the dairy business and back in the meat business.

Best Sign

The best sign of Spring was the advertising and promotion programs that should be in place locally and nationally for June Dairy Month. Pennsylvania sewed it all up last week with the first meeting on May 1 of the newly appointed Advisory Board of the

Milk Promotion and Marketing Program. The Pennsylvania program was certified by the USDA to qualify for a 10-cent credit of the 15 cent assessment that will be made on all producers starting with their May milk shipments.

The State program provides an opportunity for producers who are not participating in advertising and promotion programs in Federal Order 2, 4 or 36 to contribute two-thirds of their assessment to a Pennsylvania program. Information and sign-up cards will be mailed to about 2,700 producers the week of May 14 and responses should be made before the end of May.

Nationally, an advisory board has not been selected but nominations have been made by the states to USDA. The only thing lacking to start the whole program moving is the naming of the national board of 36 producers from the nominations made by the states.

Mehring milker

(Continued from Page A26)

knew that the Bickslers used to have one."

While restoring the milker, Ressor was talking to Verna's grandson Gary who said that his grandmother used to have one. Checking around with others involved in the Farm Museum, Ressor and Pete Horst, who serves on the board of directors for Historical Schaefferstown, concluded that the milker was indeed the same one that Verna Deck used years ago.

So the reunion took place, but one question remained on everyone's mind, would the milker still work?

Completing the restoration and adding on some new parts, Ressor took the milker to Clyde Deck's

farm where it would be tested. And Verna went right along with them.

Bundled up in warm clothes, Verna sat down on the milker's seat as she had done as a teenager and started the pumping action with her feet. Sure enough, milk flowed from the milker and into the bucket.

Verna said she was excited to see that the milker still worked. The whole incident brought back memories of a time when technology was making its mark in the farming circles.

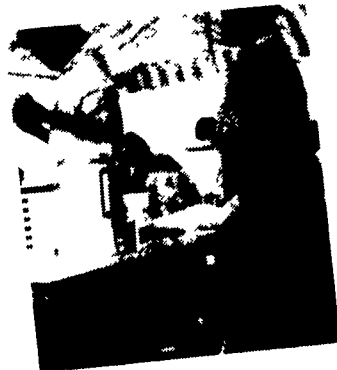
As for the Mehring milker, it will be on display at the Schaeffer Farm Museum along with other items from the past - all in an attempt to preserve the culture of the Pennsylvania Dutch country.

HESS MILLS OPEN HOUSE

--- a success... "Porkly Speaking! ---

Under partly cloudy skies, Hess Mills' first open house in Unionville, Chester County, PA, on April 28th was an overall success. Many steadfast customers of Hess

Mills turned out for the affair, as well as many newcomers. We were appreciative of all the support from everyone involved.



There were plenty of delicious roast pork sandwiches to go around. The bunnies went like hotcakes and the horse films were well attended all day. And most of the Hess Mills folks were there too, staffing the open house, answering questions, and generally socializing.

- At the end of the day, names were drawn for the door prize winners. They are:
- * 1st prize winner Robert Hicks, Meadow Springs Farms, Kennett Square, PA, who won 10 bags of prime quality horse feed (or equivalent dollar value!)
 - * 2nd prize winner Robert Bohrer, Wayne, PA, who won 5 bags of horse feed
 - * 3rd prize winner Pat Burnett, West Chester, PA, who won 3 bags of horse feed!

Congratulations to all of you!

And to all those who came to the open house in support of Hess Mills in Unionville, we would like to extend our warmest thanks and gratitude for allowing us the privilege of serving your farm and animal needs. Thank you from ALL of us at Hess Mills!



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