

# Production Climbs as Cow Numbers Drop

**UNIVERSITY PARK** — The buyout program is having the desired influence of reducing cow numbers, however, total milk production continues to rise.

Total milk production reached the 11.1 billion pound level for May 1986, up 2.7 percent from May 1985 figures. This high production came in spite of a .3 percent drop in cow numbers.

Pennsylvania, for the same time period, realized a 2.2 percent increase in milk production and a 1.1 percent drop in cow numbers. In May 1986 there were 730,000 cows in the state; this number remained constant from April 1986. However, May 1986 is 8,000 cows less than the May 1985 figure.

Production per cow in Pennsylvania rose 110 pounds from the

April 1986 level. Although May is a usual flush month, 1986 per cow production increased to 1,250 pounds from the 1985 level of 1,210 pounds.

On the national level production per cow rose 3 percent.

Blend prices continued to drop in the three Federal Orders found in Pennsylvania.

Last year, in Federal Order 2, farmers received \$11.78 per hundredweight compared to \$11.25 this year. This price also dropped 6 cents from the April price of \$11.31. With the 67 cent deduction, the actual farmer price is \$10.58.

Federal Order 4 price per hundredweight in May 1985 was \$12.82 prior to the 67 cent deduction. In May 1986 the price was \$12.27, up 4 cents from the April

1986 price of \$12.23. Jack Kirkland, dairy marketing specialist at Penn State, attributed this slight price increase from April to increased Class 1 utilization which rose .1 percent.

The western quarter of the state and the eastern part of Ohio, Federal Order 36, received \$11.86 per hundredweight of milk in May this year and \$12.57 last year. The May 1986 price dropped 2 cents from the April 1986 price.

Slaughter cow prices dropped from 39.4 cents per pound last May to 35.9 cents this May, Kirkland reported.

"Farmers are on a treadmill in an attempt to keep the milk check the same," Kirkland said. They are either reducing costs or increasing production, the latter of

which is easier, he added. However, by increasing production the price continues to drop and forces the treadmill to continue.

## Custom Farming

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home farm. He states, "When you do custom work, you get to be very efficient with all your own field-work, too. Being able to run the machinery more allows us to justify the purchase of better equipment and more modern equipment."

Though Hess doesn't depend on a set guideline for determining his custom rates, he lists several factors which help him determine his charges. These include his investment in his machinery,

maintenance, labor, fuel, and how much work is available. He feels that most operators do not charge enough to cover their investment. He charges \$12 an acre to no-till in corn, \$65 an hour to fill silo, and \$30 an hour to haul manure.

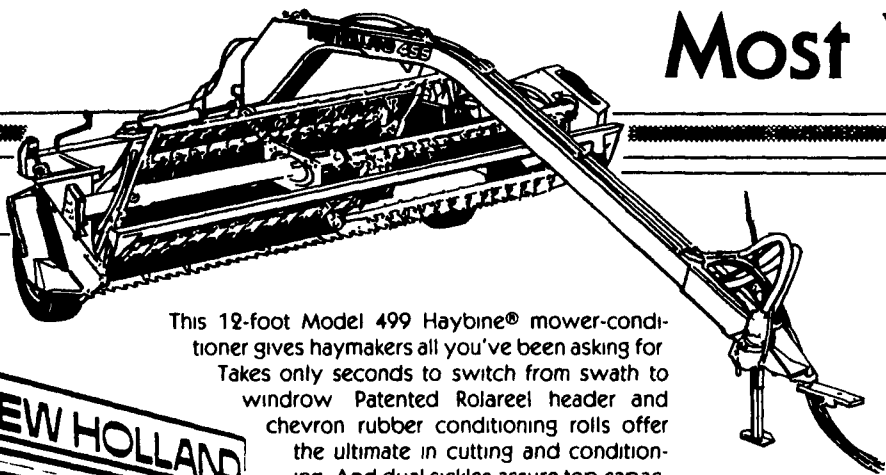
Hess sees more custom work coming his way as local farmers pencil out the cost of purchasing and maintaining specialized equipment. Hess notes, "Most guys with 100-150 acres would be much better off if they would get their work custom done. I don't know who can justify the purchase of equipment for the short time they're going to use it each year."

Extension agent Murray concludes that there are some operations better suited to custom work than others. Least advantageous would be haymaking since weather is a dominant factor in quality. Custom operators must usually work in a set time frame which might not be the right for a particular field of hay. He ranks combining as the most advantageous because of the large investment in equipment and also spraying because most operator rates are fairly reasonable and the farmer doesn't have to worry about liability, mixing of chemicals and calibration for application.

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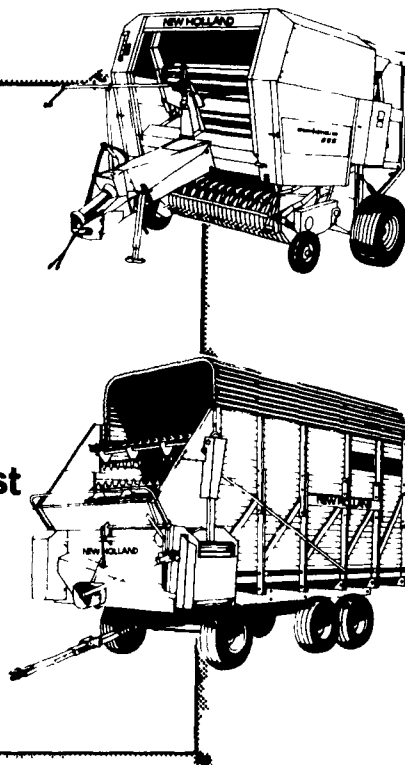
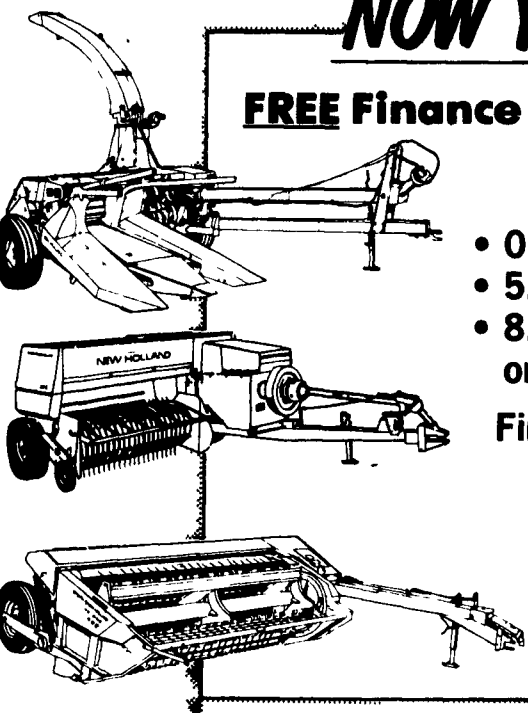
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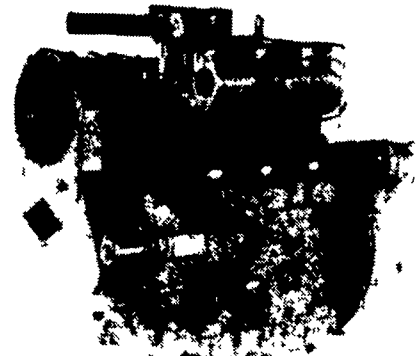
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