

## Before Planting, Observe Weather Predictions

**EDWARD J. WOODS**  
County Agent

### Stay Off Wet Ground

Don't let spring fever get the better of your good judgement. As you yearn to get into the fields and gardens, remember what you are trying to accomplish. You want seeds to germinate rapidly and seedlings to emerge quickly. The longer it takes for this to happen, the greater the opportunity is for disease and insects to attack, weaken, or destroy the seed and planting.

Follow weather predictions closely and delay planting until soil moisture and temperature conditions are favorable for good germination, and until the risk of frost injury has passed. To prevent soil compaction and surface crusting, don't work soils when they are too wet.

### Control Weeds In Pastures

A variety of weeds will grow in pastures — some may even provide some nutrition to livestock. One weed that is a problem for dairy cows on pasture is wild garlic or onion because of the flavor it gives milk.

That flavor is a less than desirable for many people. Both can be controlled along with many other broadleaf weeds by the use of Banvel or 2,4-D or a combination of these materials.

Treatment should be done in

advance of the pasture season with careful consideration for the number of days between the application of the herbicide and the start of pasturing. According to the Pennsylvania "Agronomy Guide, 1989-1990" the following restrictions apply; 2,4-D Amine, 7 days for dairy cows; 2,4-D Ester, 7 days for all livestock; and Banvel, 7 days if less than 1 pint per acre is used, up to 60 days if over 4 pints is used for lactating dairy animals. Always read and follow all label directions when applying pesticides.

### Grass Tetany Warning

Washington County cattlemen should be alert for signs of grass tetany. This disease of early pasture usually attacks milking dairy cows and beef cows nursing young calves. It is caused by deficiency of magnesium and early signs may be trembling or twitching of the muscles. Severely affected cattle may die suddenly with violent convulsions.

When the disease occurs, addition of magnesium oxide at the rate of 1/2 oz. to 1 oz. per cow daily as a supplement to the ration is good for prevention. Add magnesium oxide to the grain mix or top dress the silage fed daily. It will also pay to feed cows on early pasture at least 3 to 5 pounds of good legume or mixed legume hay.

A good insurance is to supply a

complete salt-mineral mix containing at least 10 percent magnesium, 10 percent phosphorus, and 13 percent calcium. Make sure cattle are consuming at least two ounces of mix per day. If consumption is below this level, try adding 20 percent bran, dry molasses or ground oats to the mix. There are also commercial molasses-mineral blocks formu-

lated to prevent tetany using one block per 15 cows.

Long-term prevention of grass tetany requires addition of dolomitic limestone to soils to improve magnesium content, but this method may require 3 years. In the meantime, magnesium oxide supplementation is good insurance against a disease problem which can be very expensive.

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