

Livestock Ledger

(Continued from Page C4)

discussion on food safety earlier this spring.

Emu Production

"Emu" comes from the Portuguese word "ema," meaning large bird. The second largest of the world's flightless birds, surpassed only by the ostrich, is classified as a ratite — flightless running bird with no keel on the breastbone. When fully grown, the Emu stands 5 to 6 feet tall and weighs an average of 120 pounds and can weigh up to 150 pounds.

Emu farming is becoming quite

popular in the eastern part of the United States in the last five years. This type of alternative livestock enterprise lends itself to small and part-time farming because land and management requirements are minimal. The Emu is tolerant of adverse weather conditions.

There are several ways to establish an Emu operation. Here are some alternatives:

- You can purchase emu eggs and hatch the chicks yourself. This method is lowest in cost but highest in risk. Eggs cannot be candled or guaranteed fertile — a sound knowledge of emu egg incubation is required.

- Another alternative is to purchase chicks at three months old (highest mortality rate is before three months). It is more expen-

sive than eggs or hatchlings but will probably prove more cost effective, because the mortality rate is greatly reduced and breeding uncertainty is eliminated.

- Another alternative is to purchase yearlings or young adults. More expensive than chicks, under this method eggs should be produced within two years.

- The most costly method is to purchase a proven breeder pair (birds that have laid and produced fertile eggs together). This method will allow production to begin in the next season.

As with any enterprise, the prospective Emu producer needs to research potential markets. The producer should realize that Emu markets are not limited to local buyers and national distribution

should be investigated.

The major market for Emu is breeding stock. However, Emu oil, leather, and meat are also marketable items. The oil of the Emu is used in skin care and pharmaceutical products, the skin for high quality leather products, and the meat is a low-calorie, low-fat alternative to beef.

Unfortunately, the present markets for Emu leather, oil, and meat are not well established. Producers largely depend on the breeder market to make a profit in emu production.

For more information, contact Lancaster County Cooperative Extension Agent Zoann Parker, (717) 394-6851.

Watch Out

For "Farmer" Tans

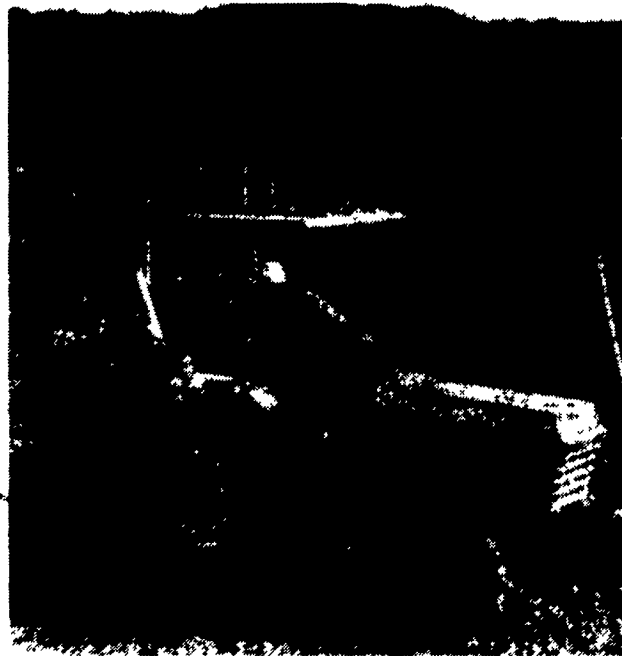
Summer is here, and that "healthy" tan you get from working outside could eventually turn into a very unwelcome condition.

Farmers, like any other people who work outdoors, are at an increased risk for skin cancer. The traditional and useful "baseball cap" is effective in shielding the eyes and forehead from the sun, but leaves other parts of the head, especially the ears, neck, and temples, poorly protected.

Skin cancer strikes more than 600,000 people in the United States each year, killing approximately 8,500 of them.

To protect yourself, the National Farm Medicine Center recommends three easy steps. First, apply a sunscreen with a sun protection factor of a least 15 each morning. This allows you to stay in the sun about 15 times longer than you could without sunblock. Second, wear long-sleeved, tightly woven, cotton shirts, long pants, and a wide-brimmed hat. Step three is to follow steps one and two year-round.

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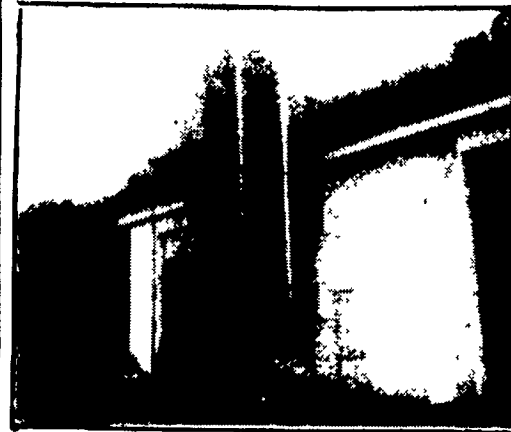
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