



This milk truck drives out the farm lane after a pick-up at Elam Kauffman's farm. Snow and extremely cold weather this week have hampered farm service vehicles such as feed and milk trucks and tested the protec-

tion of water pipes in milk houses and livestock barns. Photos by Everett Newswanger, managing editor.

Farmers In The Northeast Suffer Through Sub-Zero Weather

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And then, in a fashion to apporportion the use of the electricity, the utilities implemented a "rolling blackout" through the Harrisburg region on Wednesday.

On Thursday, the entire state government shut down in an effort to conserve energy, and because of the statewide storm conditions.

Due to conservation measures, a rolling blackout that had been scheduled for Lancaster and Lebanon counties for Wednesday was canceled.

However, even on Thursday night, roads were still being considered extremely dangerous and sections were still being closed because of ice and accidents.

The storm came on the heels of some earlier snowfall and cold which had started just prior to the opening of the 1994 Farm Show, and continued through the week. The weekend had been cold, but seasonal.

From Monday through Thursday, farmers and agribusinesses throughout the state were working to open lanes and repair frozen water pipes.

The District 12 of Atlantic Dairy Cooperative, representing dairy producers in the southern end of Lancaster County held its annual banquet Thursday at the Quarryville Fairgrounds, despite the conditions.

According to David Kleintop, field representative for ADC, the banquet is always held no matter what the weather, because of the proximity of its members, and because their modes of travel — heavy duty vehicle or horse and buggy — enable most to attend.

However, Kleintop told the group that they have to make sure

their farm lanes are cleared and cindered for the milk trucks. He said that while the 10-wheel rigs don't have much problem in most of the rough places, the cooperative only has two of them to serve the area.

He said that in order to return to a more orderly schedule of pickup, all lanes must be made accessible by a regular rig. He said that after so many days after a snow, if a truck can't get into a farm, it will go onto the next farm that has a lane open, rather than spend all the extra driving time and mileage to reroute tankers for one farm.

He said that drivers — who faced electrical blackouts in Philadelphia and being forced to wait in long lines to unload, spending hours tied up in accident-laced, snail-paced traffic — were beginning to lose patience with the frustrations of the storm.

According to Jim Barnett, director of member relations for ADC, the storm has presented a number of problems for the cooperative, but nothing that has been insurmountable. On Thursday he said it was too early to start talking about dumping milk.

The state Department of Agriculture was open Tuesday and part of Wednesday. However, on Thursday and Friday, all state offices were closed, except for state offices in Adams County, which were reopened as of midnight Thursday.

While the agriculture department isn't directly involved in storm emergencies, Boyd Wolff, state secretary of agriculture did recommend that farmers make sure their animals have adequate accessible water, shelter and perhaps extra feed.

Greg Solt, an extension agent in

Northampton County, said Thursday that farmers in his area have been "scrambling" to keep water pipes open, some even resorting to using electric welders to thaw out pipes.

"Animals are not suffering. Out farmers are keeping up with the problems."

However, he said the cold more than snow has been the main culprit. He said, "Pipes down supposedly 36 inches are freezing. One man in his 50s said that a pipe which froze had never frozen before and it was put in (the ground) by his father."

Solt said the snow may help protect alfalfa overwinter, because it's insulative properties should keep the ground from heaving. But he said he wasn't certain that would be the case.

As far as the milk trucks in his area, Solt said, "I think the trucks have been getting around. I think those drivers are more dedicated than the postmen. They just risk life and limb to get that milk out. Plus they come prepared, with chains on trucks and everything."

Also a sign of how slowed down agribusiness has been, there were very few livestock auctions held or reported this week, because of the weather and poor attendance.

There were at least 10 sales not held specifically because of the weather. More than 10 failed to provide an auction report, either because they offices were closed or because there were too few animals offered for sale.

According to Lynn Rossi, who has been working for *Lancaster Farming* for nine years reporting livestock and commodity markets, she has never seen a week in which so many markets have been closed.

"All markets experienced reduced commodities, if they took place at all. I have never seen it like this, not even during the blizzard (last March)."

That blizzard was supposedly the snow storm of the century for the state. According to reports, the weather this week can be expected to also be on the record books.

Somerset County

Barbara (Mrs. Lewis) Berkley at Berlin in Somerset County said they have had temperatures down to 25 degrees below zero, and high winds.

The roads have been closed off and on, but the milk truck got through. Last year in the March snows, the milk truck was stuck for three days near their farm, so this year's weather is rated "better." So far.

The cold does work hardships on farmers, but Ms. Berkley said farmers are resilient and take things as they come.

"We brought a few of the calves inside from the hutches because it was so cold," she said. "But mostly, we are just working to get the men who help us into the farm through the snow, and the milk out on the truck."

According to other published reports this week, farmer David Svonavec, of Somerset County found two new lambs in the barn. They were frozen stiff and seemed dead, but the family used hair dryers and heating pads. The lambs revived, were dressed in children's sweaters and returned to the barn.

Blair County

John Morrow, Tyrone, in Blair County said they haven't been away from the farm much this week, but because they have had

no disruption of electric power, the dairy operation has continued uninterrupted.

"We have some heating cables around water pipes and heat lamps in water pump wells so we are surviving," Morrow said. "We live along the road so the milk truck has been able to get here."

Bedford County

Larry Snyder, Imler, in Bedford County said even with the 20-below temperature, they haven't had any real problems with the dairy. The milk truck has made all the pick-up stops, and everything is about routine. Snyder said, actually cold weather helps production because the cows like cold better than warm.

Lawrence County

Arlene (Mrs. Richard) Martin at Volant in Lawrence County said that while she and her husband have sold their cows, they drive milk trucks and know some of the major problems farmers in the county are facing.

For example, both milk truck drivers and milk testing supervisors have found farmers who have not been able to milk on time.

Silo unloaders and barn cleaners are frozen.

Water pipes are broken, and the business of farming is a struggle on some farms right now. Some farmers are concerned about how to get the cows milked and fed.

While Ms. Martin said they were experiencing a heat wave of zero degrees on Thursday, she said the difference between the snows of 1993 and 1994 is that last year they came in March when spring was just around the corner.

"We are looking for the January thaw," she said.

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