

MILK CHECK

THOMAS JURCHAK
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Jurchak To Retire

Editor's Note: We at Lancaster Farming will miss retiring Lackawanna County extension agent Thomas Jurchak's reports on dairy market activities and the effects on farmgate prices. For years, Jurchak's insight and conversational writing style made his Milk Market News column an integral part of the Lancaster Farming newspaper. Often considered one of the most difficult subjects on which to report, because of the uniqueness and complexity of the market and regulations, Jurchak consistently made the complexities of dairy pricing understandable. Always well-received, his column has helped to educate, enlighten and entertain many thousands of readers. We thank him, and wish him well.

THOMAS JURCHAK
Lackawanna Co. Extension Agent
(As of Dec. 14)

SCRANTON (Lackawanna Co.) — Three consecutive months of increasing milk production, followed by lower cheese prices finally caught up with the Minnesota-Wisconsin Price (M-W) for November.

After struggling to get a 25-cent increase in October, it took a drop of 43 cents to \$11.86 in November, but still not reflecting the full impact of falling cheese prices that fell over 5 cents the first two weeks of the month.

The M-W is now 89 cents less than last year, but still \$1.87 above the support price. However, looking back to January, the average M-W for 11 months this year was \$12.06, compared to \$11.73 a year ago, and that's an increase of 33 cents in a year when milk price averages were expected to fall below the 1993 levels.

On The Skids

You could see it coming from the last week of October, when cheese prices, for the first time in 20 weeks, dropped a half-cent, and then another 10 cents in November.

In December, the tempo slowed down to a 1-cent drop the first week.

On Dec. 9, barrels dropped another cent, and for blocks there was no change.

Now we have barrels and blocks selling for \$1.21 per pound, which is where they were in June.

Last spring, the low price was \$1.18, and hopefully that's about where it will end this month. The "no change" in the block prices last week was encouraging, but more adjustments are coming.

The free fall in cheese prices the last seven weeks adds up to nearly 12 cents a pound, and that could translate into a \$1.20 drop in M-W.

If that happens, the M-W is in for another 77-cent skid to about \$11 in the next month of two.

Chemsweep Signup Deadline Nears

LEESPORT (Berks Co.) — Farm families in 10 counties have until Dec. 31 to sign up with the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture for participation in the one-time "Chemsweep" program.

The disposal of pesticides is one of the most difficult, expensive and potentially hazardous concerns that agricultural producers face, especially if the pesticides are in old or unidentified containers.

While not restricted to any type of pesticide container, the program was especially designed to provide a way for people to get rid of old containers that may be sitting around in buildings, basements, or sheds. This service is not designed

to be a long term project. It's goal is to provide an opportunity for people to make their homes and properties safe with the least amount of personal cost and inconvenience.

Sometimes the containers have banned pesticides or are without labels.

The Chemsweep program is being made available to people in Armstrong, Berks, Butler, Chester, Columbia, Eric, Luzerne, Miffling, Montour, and York counties. However, those who wish to be included on the list for container pickup must sign up with the PDA by Dec. 31.

The program is open to every farm in these counties, but is not restricted to dairy or livestock

operations. The public service is open to any person or operation with pesticides, such as nurseries, lawn care and landscapers, Christmas tree and greenhouse operators, or mushroom growers.

Individually, the cost of properly and legally disposing of the pesticides would most likely be prohibitive, but through this public service program, there is no charge to participate.

To ensure disposal of containers, farm families are being asked to fill out a disposal registration form. The form must include (if possible) the product name, EPA registration number, formulation, size and quantity of the container. Materials without labels may be analyzed by the PDA for identity, before being taken.

This information is needed only to help PDA plan for the on-farm pickup of these products. The pickup will be scheduled sometime in 1995.

For more information, or to obtain a pesticide disposal form, call the local cooperative extension office.

Not All Bad

All that this reflects are changes in dairy product prices that have occurred this month, but won't show up in your milk check until next year.

Farm prices in all federal milk market areas will show increases in the checks you get in December. That should help you enjoy the holidays a lot more.

So, on that positive note, I'm sorry to say that this is the end of the line.

End Of The Line

I'm retiring from Penn State at the end of the year, so this will be my last market report for the Milk Market News column, and the Northeast Dairy Marketer from Cornell, but I'm sure it will be continued by more capable hands in the future.

I started the Milk Market News over 18 years ago, at the urging of dairy producers in northeastern Pennsylvania, and, as nearly as I can tell, wrote about 300 issues that were distributed over several states with the help of other county agents, extension specialists, industry leaders and farm publications, all of whom I thank sincerely for their cooperation.

And an equally large "thank you" to all those people who helped me to understand milk marketing and kept me informed on issues and changes, so hopefully producers would have sound information for management decisions as a result of these newsletters.

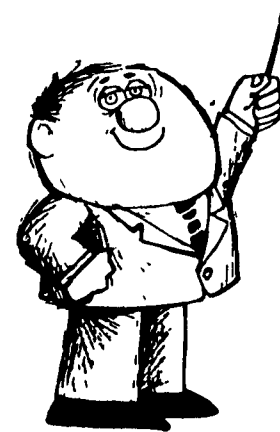
I was only the messenger.

It really has been an enjoyable part of my extension career. Something I wanted to do because producers felt there was a need for it.

Milk marketing information is now more readily available than in the past, but I hope I have contributed to a better understanding of what producers read and hear.

So, I leave thanking all of you who have helped me in my training and supported me in my efforts to inform producers, and I offer whatever talent I have developed in the past to anyone who wants to make use of it in the future.

Happy holidays.



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