

## Beef supply is on increase

DENVER (AP)—The American National Cattlemen's Association says that in the midst of the energy crisis and various shortages-consumers have at least one thing to be happy about—the supply of beef is increasing and its price is decreasing.

In a statement released today, ANCA President John Trotman said the improved consumer conditions exist even though the "cattle industry has been losing money at a rate of \$250 million a month."

He said that despite this loss, lower cattle prices are being reflected in lower prepared meat prices, he added that the current reduced prices are "encouraging housewives to buy more steaks, roasts and ground beef."

Trotman, citing statistics compiled from government and other sources by the National Livestock and Meat Board, said the average price of round steak in December, 1972, was \$1.46 a pound. The price was up to \$1.88 during the beef price freeze in August of this year, but is now back down to an estimated \$1.47 a pound.

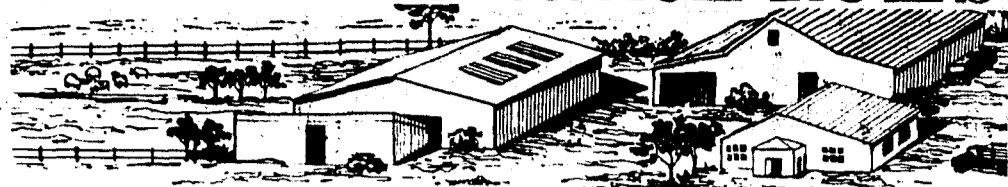
He said that in several cities, such as Chicago, the price of round steak has been as low as \$1.17 a pound during recent specials.

Trotman said, "the government's ill-advised price control program caused tremendous disruptions in our beef production and marketing system."

However, the law of supply and demand is now operating to a greater extent that it was before, and our supermarkets are currently back to more normal meat merchandising patterns."

Trotman added, however, that he expected beef prices to increase in the months ahead, as supply tapers off because of the low prices.

# Farm and Ranch News



## ASC will adminstrate new farm legislation

Beginning with 1974 crops, the Beaverhead County Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation ASC committee, which takes office Jan. 1, will start administering the new farm legislation for local producers.

Fred W. Brown is the chairman and is a livestock producer from the Blacktail area. He is serving the final year of a three-year term of office.

Vice chairman is W. L. Staudenmeyer, whose agricultural operations include the East Bench farming and cattle feeding units as well as a summer operation in the Centennial. He is in the second year of his second three-year term.

Third member of the committee is Neil Benson, a livestock man from south of Dillon. He was re-elected this year for his second three year term.

Alternate members to serve in 1974 are Emmett Blomquist, a Simmental and Hereford breeder, operating the Vigilante ranch north of Dillon and William Tash who operates the Dillon unit of Tash Ranches Inc., a Dillon and Polaris cattle

production business. (The alternates serve one year terms.)

Target price programs for wheat and feed grains were included in the Agriculture Act of 1973 and will first apply to 1974 crops. The legislation sets national farm policy for 1974 through 1977 crops.

Since the target price law frees farmers to produce without restriction in answer to market demand, it is a turnaround from previous farm legislation, reported Giff Weston, executive director of the county ASCS office.

The target price legislation guarantees a minimum return for a producer's normal production on his allotted acres, but offers neither incentives nor restrictions on additional acreage he added. "The pull of the marketplace will determine crop acreages," the farm program official said.

Emphasizing that wheat, feed grains (corn, grain sorghum, barley) are the only crops now

under target price legislation, Weston said that considerable discussion is being heard around the country about target prices for some commodities now under restrictive-type programs, such as peanuts, rice, extra-long-staple cotton and sugar.

"Whenever possibilities for new farm programs are under heavy discussion, local ASC committees and employees get a lot of questions. We don't have answers for a lot of them because our job is to administer the programs that are on the books now. We can answer questions about the programs we have; we can't speculate about possible future programs," Weston said.

In addition to the feed grain and wheat programs, principal programs in Beaverhead county which are administered by the county ASC committee include: farm storage loan, bee indemnity, wool incentive, commodity loans, and REAP — if the program is re-instated.

## Greater gains on rolled barley

Cattle show greater weight gains on rolled barley. This finding comes out of research studies at Montana State University and the Agricultural Research Center at Huntley.

A veteran animal nutritionist, O. O. Thomas at MSU, reports results in the December Montana Stockgrower. Two feed trials clearly show that although steers can be fed whole barley during a wintering or fattening period, greater gains can be obtained more efficiently when the barley is steam or dry rolled.

The nutritionist adds, "Lately there has been considerable interest in feeding whole grains.

Because of success with whole corn feeding tests were made to find out if similar success could be made by feeding whole barley.

"Four studies were conducted on 'Steer-A-Year Calves. Slower gains were made by steers fed whole barley and they required more feed per hundred weight gains than steers fed steam rolled barley."

Thomas concludes, "Combination feeding of complete rations of stealfi rolled barley, beet pulp, small amounts of hay and MSU supplement 713, showed the greatest gains during the test period."

## Farmers approach 1974 with caution signals

WASHINGTON (AP)—Farmers are approaching 1974 with caution signals blinking following the best season on record, generally, for fattening their bankrolls.

The signals include these possibilities:

Fuel shortages could worsen and impair crop expansion plans for 1974, resulting in further deficits and soaring prices for fertilizer and other capital goods needed to boost output. —In the case of grain, particularly wheat, rising world production this year could mean lower market prices later on.

—Soaring exports of U.S. farm products, coupled with possible cutbacks in 1974 production, could bring some kind of curb on overseas sales of grain and other commodities.

Even usually optimistic economists in the Agriculture Department confess at least some bewilderment about farm prospects for the coming year. At best, they say, 1974 will not be as good as 1973.

The department's Outlook and Situation Board foresees demand continuing to press supplies for most farm products in the first half of 1974. After that, with sharply increased crop output in prospect, it says the outlook is less clear.

On the whole, however, it concludes that farm income for the year probably will be higher than for any other year except the past one.

Farm economists pointed to these other basic prospects:

—Larger crop production is needed in 1974, not only to satisfy what appears to be a near-record export demand but to make more essential raw materials available for boosting U.S. food production.

—Government farm programs, led by the Agriculture and Consumer Protection Act of 1973, are being pushed by the Nixon administration toward "market-oriented" systems for gradually reducing federal subsidies to farmers.

—Inflation, despite administration assurances that it is being brought under control, continues to gnaw away at farm profits in many individual sectors of agriculture—such as dairying—and threatens to dampen expansionist plans generally in 1974.

No period has gone into the agricultural record books quite like 1973. Crop production, exports, farm income, changes in basic farm law, and the crunch on production supplies made big news.

Despite a late spring, farmers were able to set crop records in 1973. Corn output, at more than 5.6 billion bushels, was sorely needed to help replenish dwindling feed stockpiles.

Soybeans, at more than 1.5 billion bushels, were another high-demand item as a protein source both for domestic and export use. Prices rose to record levels of \$10 or more at the farm, although those marks came long after most farmers disposed of their 1973 crop.

Wheat production was another record of 1.7 billion bushels, with about 70 per cent of the crop destined for export. Prices soared to record levels—\$5.62 per bushel nationally at the farm by mid-September.

Over-all, total U.S. crop production in 1973 by November was estimated 19 per cent larger than in 1967, compared with a 13 per cent boost in 1972.

Measured in terms of value, volume and in any other manner, nothing previously approached the record \$12.9 billion in overseas farm sales for the fiscal year ended June 30, 1973.

The huge wheat and corn sales to Russia which began in mid-1972 were important, but shipments to nearly every other foreign country also were up. Dollar devaluations, which made U.S. commodities cheaper to many buyers, were major factors.

Looking ahead, USDA economists say 1973-74 exports will be up nearly 50 per cent from last season—to around \$19 billion. Wheat, feed grains, soybeans and cotton continue to lead the list.

Measured on a net basis, farmers pocketed a record \$25 billion in 1973, up about \$5 billion from 1972. Larger production and higher prices for most commodities offset rising costs.

Still, there were trouble spots. Cattle producers saw choice steers soar to a record \$56 per 100 pounds in August, then tumble by one-third as consumers revolted over high beef prices in the supermarket. By late fall steers were selling for around \$40 per hundredweight, or about what many cattlemen said it was costing to produce the animals because of high corn and other feed prices.

But it was the dairy farmer, despite record high milk prices, who most visibly was hurt by spiraling costs. Milk output for cut 3 per cent, the sharpest drop in years.

Another development was the move by the Nixon administration to open the door to more foreign dry milk, cheese and butter in 1973.

Nevertheless, by year-end USDA economists figured that gross sales receipts from livestock in 1973 would be up almost \$10 billion, while crop marketings rose \$11 billion from 1972.

Over-all, total sales of products by farmers in 1973 were expected to be at least \$82 billion, up 35 per cent from 1972.

No single legislative action by Congress in 1973 had more impact on the future of agriculture than the new farm bill setting up "target prices" for wheat, cotton and feed grains. It also included for the first time a \$20,000 limit on crop subsidy payments a single grower can collect in a year.

The law takes effect with 1974 production. Basically, it scrapped old mandatory acreage allotments and quotas for the affected crops, along with direct or supplemental payment provisions.

Instead, as long as the cash market for a commodity is above a target price in the law over a specified period, farmers will get no government payments. But if the markets lag, then payments will be due to make up the deficit on that portion of their crop normally used domestically and for export.

Farmers can produce as much as they choose in 1974, and there are no requirements for idling any part of their land in order to qualify for benefits.

## Farm trade with Mexico is Gaining

WASHINGTON (AP)—Farm trade with Mexico is gaining sharply as consumer demand on both sides of the border increases, says the Agriculture Department.

In a review of trade last fiscal year, which ended June 30, sales of U.S. farm products to Mexico totaled \$254 million, nearly double the year before, officials said.

But Mexico is a major supplier of farm products to the United States, including fruits, vegetables, beef and live cattle for American feedlots. Imports of those totaled \$706 million in 1972-73, up 32 per cent.

The analysis was included in a report, Foreign Agricultural Trade of the United States, published monthly by the department.

## Prescribed burning may increase forage

Montana ranchers may increase forage production as much as five times with prescribed burning, says a range management specialist at Montana State University in Bozeman.

Dr. Carl Wambolt reports in the December Montana Stockgrower, "Many natural plant communities have changed character largely because man prevented or suppressed fire. This allows plant species that are less fire resistant to thrive."

Dr. Wambolt warns that sites for controlled burning be selected carefully. He advises that temperatures should not be above 65 degrees, relative humidity at least 35 per cent, and winds not more than 15 miles per hour.

Dr. Wambolt recommends strip burning to provide a fire break. He explains, "This allow faster and more efficient burning without danger of losing control."

"Fast moving fire that is not allowed to get excessively hot merely consumes unused surface covering without penetrating deeply to damage the mineral soil or layers of decomposing material that protects the soils from erosion," advises Dr. Wambolt.

He concludes, "It is usually necessary to put out wild fires to protect lives, property and natural resources. However, prescribed burning can provide the benefits of natural fires without the threat of uncontrolled burning."

## Stockgrowers concerned over livestock

"Legislation should be introduced in the 1974 Montana Legislature requiring all highways to be fenced with appropriate warnings issued to motorists," says the executive director of the Montana Stockgrowers Association.

Mons Teigen of Helena continues, "This duty should be placed upon the Department of Highways as an expenditure in the interest of highway safety. They can use the same source of funds they are now using for guard rails, signs etc."

Teigen says that the Montana Stockgrowers Association is concerned over livestock on highway right-of-ways.

He says, "We recognize that a cow on the highway can cause excessive damage to persons and property traveling on the highways, and stockmen, like other people are concerned over the accident rate in the state and are seeking a means to curb the problem."

## Farm exports help nation's trade balance

U.S. farm exports are continuing to make a substantial contribution to the nation's trade balance according to Leo S. Kolstad, executive director of the Montana Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service (ASCS) office.

"It is becoming increasingly apparent that the exportation of farm products from our highly productive agricultural plant offers the best way to pay the bill for the many foreign-made products that add to our enjoyment and affluence," Kolstad commented.

Kolstad reported that the latest tabulation, for the month of October, shows that record agricultural exports boosted the total U.S. trade balance into the black for the month and for the first 10 months of the year. October agricultural exports of \$1.7 billion produced a surplus in farm trade of \$1 billion. This more than offset a deficit of \$648 million in non-agricultural trade, producing trade surpluses of \$376 million for the month and \$232 million for January-October, Kolstad said.

"When the figures are in for the full year," Kolstad said, "it is expected that agriculture will

help give the nation its first annual trade surplus since 1970." Kolstad added that indications now point to a surplus in the nation's farm trade account for the year of more than \$8.5 billion to be applied against any deficits in non-farm trade.

"If we want to buy in the world market, we have got to sell at least as much as we buy or we are courting economic trouble," Kolstad said. "That is why the U.S. trade balance is important, and why the favorable balance of trade from farm products contributes to the well-being of the entire nation."

People do not trust Ag-Department

WASHINGTON (AP)—The Agriculture Department's consumer affairs representative, Nancy H. Steorts, says many people do not understand what the department is all about.

"Some believe that we are strictly on the side of the food industry, that we do not have any information worth sharing with consumers," she said Tuesday at the National Agricultural Outlook Conference.

## Farm workers get more pay

WASHINGTON (AP)—An Agriculture Department survey of wage rates shows that hired farm workers this fall averaged about 10 per cent more per hour than a year ago.

When the survey was conducted during the week of Oct. 7-13, the average rate paid to all workers was \$2.20 per hour compared with \$1.97 in the same week a year earlier.

Wages differed widely, however, according to job arrangements and type of work performed.

Workers paid on a piece-work basis, for example, averaged an equivalent of \$2.71 per hour, compared with \$2.37 a year earlier. Those paid by the hour only got \$2.24 per hour, up from \$1.90.

Workers in back-houses for vegetables and other products averaged the lowest \$2.12 per hour this year and \$1.92 in 1972.



## Rain doesn't always make things grow.

Last year bad weather helped kill over 11,000 people. Good-weather drivers did the rest. Drivers who drive like it's summer all year long. Slick streets greatly increase the chances of a skid, but that doesn't make the good-weather driver go any slower. Rain, ice, and snow almost double the distance needed to stop, but that doesn't stop him from following too closely. Bad weather can drastically limit visibility, but that doesn't make him any

You know the kind of driver we mean. Watch out for him. And make sure you're a good bad-weather driver. We want you and your family to be around to enjoy the good weather.

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