

Farmer bears brunt

Consumer meat prices down

WASHINGTON — New government figures show that consumer beef prices are at a 16-month low, down more than 14 per cent from what they were a year ago, and that farmers have borne the brunt of the decline.

The Agriculture Department said Tuesday that retail beef prices in July averaged slightly more than \$1.38 a pound. That was the lowest on an all-cut basis since beef was about \$1.34 a pound in April 1975. In July of last year they soared to a record of \$1.61 a pound.

Beef supplies have been huge this

spring and summer as farmers and ranchers stepped up grain-fed cattle production and continued to thin out herds. As a result, market prices for live animals have been depressed.

Last month, USDA said, the farm value of beef sold in stores was 74.2 cents a pound, a drop of nearly 30 per cent from July of last year. However, the middleman share for transporting, processing and selling beef was 64 cents a pound, an increase of nearly 16 per cent.

The farm value is not what farmers get for live animals since it takes nearly 2.3 pounds of steer on the hoof to make one pound of super-market beef. It is, however, their

share of what consumers pay for beef at stores.

While retail beef prices continued their decline last month, pork prices rose slightly from June to July, averaging about \$1.42 a pound. That was 1.1 per cent less than a year earlier and substantially below the record of nearly \$1.59 a pound for retail pork last October.

Preliminary figures for early August showed that retail beef prices have continued to decline and that pork also has started to drop.

The farm value of pork in July — 86.2 cents — was down nearly 15 per cent from a year ago, while the "marketing spread" or middleman

share of 55.9 cents was up almost 31 per cent from July 1975, according to the department.

Over-all last month, the marketing spread of farm-produced foods widened 1.2 per cent, with the increases for beef and pork leading the way. In contrast, the spread between what farmers get and consumers pay for poultry and oilseed products narrowed last month.

That left farmers in July getting an average of 40 cents of each \$1 consumers spent on food, down from a share of 40.4 cents in June and 43.3 cents in July of last year, officials said.

Sugar prices drop

WASHINGTON — World sugar inventories are building rapidly and "recently have exerted downward pressures" on prices according to the Agriculture Department.

Current estimates put world sugar production in 1976-77 at a record of 92.6 million to 95.6 million short tons of 2,000 pounds each, compared with the previous high of 89.6 million tons last season, a department's Outlook and Situation Board said Tuesday.

World sugar consumption is expected to rise two million to three million tons from last season's 89 million tons. Thus, a sizeable increase in leftover supplies is indicated by the end of the 1976-77 year, officials said. The world reserve at the end of last season was 18 million tons, an increase of about 500,000 tons and the first gain in five years.

Since the New York price of raw sugar peaked at \$16.60 per one hundred pounds on July 6, it has dropped sharply to \$9.88 on Aug. 23

and could average below \$12 per hundred pounds. The New York price for the period January to July averaged \$15.35 per hundred pounds, compared \$22.47 for the entire 1975 calendar year.

"U.S. and world prices are to remain at low levels until crop prospects are clearer and markets assess the price levels seem consistent with proper supplies and anticipated demand," the report said.

Texas dairy situation looks bright

With Texas dairy cows producing more milk, milk bringing a favorable price, and the milk-fed price ratio continuing to drop, dairymen can generally look toward the remainder of 1976 with happy anticipation.

That assessment comes from Dr. Randall Stelly, economist with the Texas Agricultural Extension Service and the Texas Agricultural Experiment Station.

A number of factors suggest a favorable outlook for Texas dairymen in the coming months:

1. The continued tight supply-demand balance is likely to result in fairly strong seasonal rises in farm prices during the second half of the year.

2. Although feed prices have increased from mid-spring levels, they are not likely to maintain recent

levels if normal weather prevails.

3. Milk-feed price relationships this summer and fall likely will favor continued heavy concentrate feeding, even if feed prices are somewhat higher than now expected.

4. There was a large supply of replacement stock on dairy farms at the beginning of 1976.

5. The value of dairy cows has increased steadily since August 1975 to an average of \$479 per head in June, up \$66 from last June.

6. Prices paid for production items thus far in 1976 have risen more slowly than last year but have averaged about one-tenth higher than a year ago.

7. The general economy continues to improve, thus strengthening the demand for dairy products.

Under these conditions, milk output likely will continue to exceed year-earlier levels throughout the remainder of the year, said Stelly.

As far as the key milk producing counties in the state are concerned, Hopkins and Erath counties are the two top producers, accounting for one-fourth of all the milk produced in Texas. Hopkins County produced about 16 per cent of the June milk output while Erath County produced about 9 per cent. Ten counties accounted for almost half of all the milk produced in Texas during June.

Proposed meat rules protested

WASHINGTON — A consumer group said Tuesday that proposed new government meat rules will let processors put bits of bone in hot dogs, garbage scraps in canned beef stew and simmered fat in a variety of prepared food products.

The new meat regulations are being considered by the Agriculture Department, which contends that the changes will enable processors to reclaim significant amounts of protein and thereby help consumers with their meat budgets.

But the Public Citizens' Health Research Group said the proposals "should be seen for what they are — rules for turning garbage into money — and rejected."

Processors currently are allowed to salvage meat from bones and fat under temporary rules announced last spring. The proposed regulations, if adopted, will put them on a permanent footing.

A senior department official, denying an earlier request for cancellation of the temporary rules, said there is no evidence to suggest a

threat to the nation's food supply from the use of rendering bone or the practice of rendering extract protein.

The plan has been sitting since last spring after the department announced it and set Aug. 1 as a deadline for public comment.

NO MORE PLOWBOYS LINCOLN, Neb. (AP) — possible to farm without tilling over the soil?

Some soil experts feel tilling is unnecessary and waste and expect to prove it. In test, researchers at the University of Nebraska School of Agriculture, with a grant from Phillips Petroleum Co., start this fall on an experimental system in which everything from planting to harvesting is done without tilling the soil.

No rain, heat hurting corn

WASHINGTON — Corn and soybean crops, key ingredients of livestock feed and valuable as exports have continued to deteriorate

because of heat and rainless skies in some major producing areas, according to the Agriculture Department.

As of Aug. 22, the department said Tuesday in a weekly weather review, the crops were under dry weather stress in much of the Western corn belt. Nationally, most of the corn "remained in fair to good" shape, the report said.

"Iowa corn suffered most severely in the West, Central and Northern third of the state, with barren stalks and poorly filled ears," the report said. "Elsewhere, the Iowa crop is in good to excellent condition."

Soybeans in the dry areas also needed rain to help fill developing pods, officials said.

Foreign animal diseases conference topic

Texas Animal Health Commission Director H. Q. Sibley will report on the status of Texas livestock as he helps kick off a Sept. 1-2 symposium at Texas A&M University on foreign animal diseases.

Sibley, the state's leading observer of livestock maladies, is among a score of speakers at the program. His presentation is 9:15 a.m. Sept. 1 in Rudder Tower.

Nearly 200 veterinarians, public health officials, researchers and industry representatives will hear ses-

sions on Newcastle disease, foot-and-mouth disease, swine vesicular disease, regulation from a cattleman's viewpoint, hog cholera and Venezuelan equine encephalomyelitis (VEE), among others.


Overall, the symposium will review foreign ailments that threaten America's livestock industry.

In addition to specific illnesses, speakers will examine vectors, outbreak response, lab diagnosis of tropical maladies and the role of wildlife in exotic disease outbreaks.

Cosponsoring the program are Texas A&M's Institute of Tropical Veterinary Medicine and the USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Services, emergency veterinary branch.

Representatives from both will speak, along with other authorities from Texas A&M, the Food and Drug Administration, Arizona State University, the Southeastern Cooperative Wildlife Disease Study at the University of Georgia and the Callahan Ranch at Encinal.

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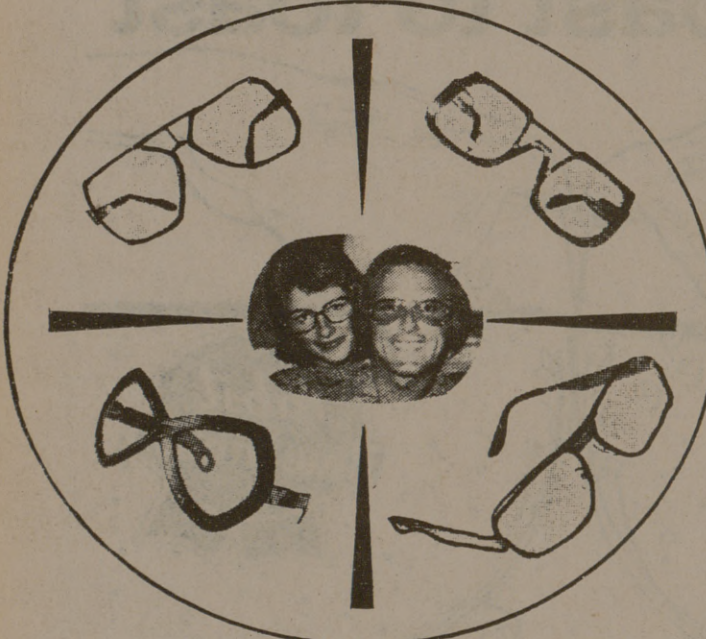
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In the market for a dinosaur footprint? Montshire museum auctioning old exhibits

HANOVER, N.H. — Want to impress friends with a relatively new gnu, say about 5 years old? A 200-million-year-old dinosaur footprint? How about a kudu or a crocodile?

It's a chance of a lifetime to replace that \$65 art book on Japanese toys or medieval typefaces on the coffee table with a real conversation piece.

You might even replace the coffee table with a slab of petrified mud about four by six feet, three to four inches thick that is an imprint of a dinosaur footprint left 200 million years ago at Turner's Falls, Mass.

These marvels will be auctioned off at the Montshire Museum of Science in Hanover on Saturday. About

\$5 may buy a rattlesnake skin and \$600 a stuffed grizzly bear.

The museum was set up two years ago to exhibit natural science specimens from northern New England.

Most of the exhibits were donations from nearby Dartmouth College's natural science collection. Some items are 400 million years old.

However, Robert Chaffee, the museum director, says of the 60,000 exhibits, "That's too much. We can't find the place to store that stuff."

For instance, Chaffee feels the museum needs only six of the 81 dinosaur footprint slabs, and the ursus horribilus, a grizzly shot in Montana 100 years ago, isn't your

average northern New England bear.

So, the museum has decided to get rid of the specimens that do not qualify or are redundant, and raise some money by selling the stuffed and mounted animals and artifacts.

A special feature of the auction is that it will be open to the public. Normally, museums either sell to other museums or schools privately or barter with each other for their exhibits.

The Montshire has hired a professional New England country auctioneer who will sell the goods to anyone willing to bid for them.

Each item will have a dollar value. Anything bid over that value will be tax-deductible as a donation to the museum.

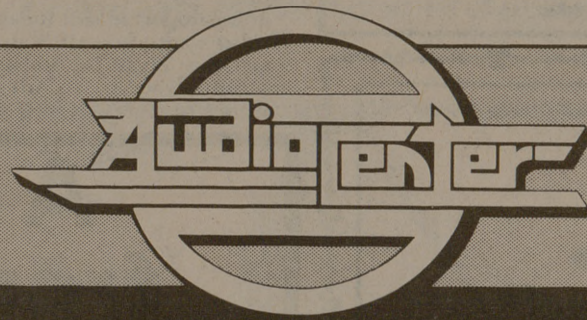
Chaffee points out that many of the items are unavailable these days because of modern laws against mounting game animals.

This will thus be a rare opportunity for seekers of curia to buy stuffed gnus, ostriches, ostrich eggs, kudu horns, mounted baboons or a square-lipped rhinoceros, a rarity indeed because there are no more than 200 of them alive in all of Africa.

Chaffee says it is hard to put a price tag on the dinosaur footprints because "I haven't classified them yet. The price will depend on their condition."

The most expensive item, he says, is the Montana grizzly.

"I'm willing to deal before the auction," Chaffee says. "I'd love to swap it for a good black bear."




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