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Stone fruit regulations

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Potato storage in Western Australia

Potatoes can be grown all year round in one part or another of the South-West, and for this reason, potato storage has never been seriously looked at in this State.

However, it may be more profitable to grow only one crop of potatoes each year and store them to maintain a continuous supply.

In Western Australia, the midseason crop (planted August to October) consistently out-yields both the early and late crops. The average yield of the midseason crop is about 16½ tons per acre, compared with 9½ tons per acre for the early and late crops. Growers who now produce both a midseason and a late crop may find it more profitable to grow only the high-yielding midseason crop and to store the surplus for later sale.

In cooler parts of the world where only one potato crop can be grown each year, storage is essential to maintain a continuous supply.

Storage requirements in Western Australia would differ only slightly from these cooler countries. The main difference would be that we would need to protect our potatoes from extremes of heat rather than extremes of cold. The basic requirements of efficient insulation, moisture and ventilation control apply in both cases.

Seed potatoes must be stored at 36 to 40°F to prevent sprouting. At these low temperatures the potatoes tend to sweeten so it is better to store eating potatoes at 50 to 55°F and to use a chemical sprout inhibitor.

Eastern States experience has shown that potato storage is commercially practical for up to eight months.

Short term storage of midseason crop potatoes in Western Australia, using refrigerated night air and sprout inhibitors may be worth investigating.

D. C. HOSKING,
Adviser, Horticulture Division.

Stone fruit regulations

Stone fruit grading regulations were introduced for the first time recently to keep small, green or badly blemished fruit off the market. This type of fruit is always in poor demand and can spoil the prices obtained for better lines of fruit by creating the impression of heavy supplies.

The new regulations are simple and in line with the normal packing and marketing practices of most growers.

There is no range of grades such as "Extra Fancy", "Fancy" or "Plain" as there is for apples and pears. The standard for quality simply requires that each case of stone fruit be of one variety and sound, clean, well-formed, mature, free from broken skins and free from unsightly blemish.

Blemish includes all superficial marks which do not affect the keeping quality of the fruit but spoil its appearance.

These regulations can have no effect on the supply of fruit on the market in glut seasons.

A Stone Fruit Sales Advisory Committee fixes minimum sizes for the various kinds of stone fruit to relieve severe gluts. These minimum sizes are published in the press as they are introduced.

Other stone fruit packing regulations state that any fruit which is exposed, or the shown surface of the fruit, must be a true sample of the quality of the fruit throughout the case.

All cases must be marked with the grower’s name and address, the kind or variety and the size or count of the fruit it contains.

Inspectors are employed to ensure that fruit sold direct to the retailer, by-passing the Metropolitan Markets, conforms with these requirements.

W. J. HART,
Inspector, Horticulture Division.
Progress in brucellosis eradication

The introduction of a national campaign to eradicate brucellosis from cattle has resulted in a hearteningly low number of infected animals detected by abattoir sampling.

The two major reasons for the campaign are to prevent the direct losses caused by the disease and to maintain standards of health to comply with export market requirements.

Brucellosis causes abortions in cattle, usually in the second half of pregnancy. Following the abortions the cows may suffer from retained afterbirth, secondary infections and infertility, and produce less milk.

The brucella germ is transmitted between female animals through discharges from infected cows after abortion. Bulls can become infected and may become sterile, but do not play a large part in transmitting infection.

The disease can be transmitted to humans, though pasteurisation of milk now protects consumers.

The value of milk protein

For many years, milk or cream used for manufacturing has been paid for solely on the basis of butterfat content. Liquid whole milk has been paid for by the gallon. No account has been taken of protein content.

In a world now amply supplied with edible fats and oils but lacking adequate supplies of high quality protein, it is natural that protein levels be considered in payments for milk.

Milk solids are what is left of milk after the water is removed. Liquid whole milk contains 12 to 13 per cent total solids. Milk fat, or butterfat, is one of the main solids in milk and forms about 4 per cent of whole milk.

The other solids in milk are grouped together as solids-not-fat. A good milk has at least 8.5 per cent solids-not-fat.

The solids-not-fat are mainly lactose and protein. Lactose, or sugar of milk, is valuable in baby and invalid foods, but otherwise has little use because cane and beet sugar are plentiful and relatively cheap.

Milk protein, on the other hand, is one of the most valuable foodstuffs available to man. It contains essential amino acids which are not widely available.

In Western Australia, the disease occurs mainly in the dairying areas of the South-West. Recent tests have shown that there is no brucellosis in the Kimberleys and regulations now restrict movement of cattle into that area.

Infected herds are quarantined, and farmers helped to eradicate the disease from their properties. Heifers are vaccinated with Strain 19 vaccine, which gives life-long immunity from abortions. Such cattle may still become infected but will not abort. If a large number of animals in a herd are infected, 45/20 vaccine may be used on adult cattle. If only a small number of animals are infected, they are sold for slaughter and compensation is paid.

Cattle tail tagging has been introduced to trace the origin of infected animals detected at abattoirs. This system can also provide a record of freedom from the disease for herd owners.

P. B. LEWIS,
Senior Veterinary Surgeon.

Milk protein makes up about 3 to 3.5 per cent of whole milk. For centuries, the most concentrated form of milk protein has been cheese. However, this is not readily available to many of the underdeveloped countries. Milk powder has been the only way of obtaining this protein in many parts of the world.

Recently a new process has been developed to obtain dried milk protein without fat or lactose. This can be used to fortify various foods such as biscuits, cake mixes, pressed meats and sausages, as well as high protein pharmaceutical preparations.

The increased recognition of the value of the protein portion of milk is strengthening the case for payment on the basis of protein content as well as fat. This has already been introduced in some countries.

Such a system involves reducing the price paid per pound of butterfat so that total price paid for the milk is much the same as it is at present. Separate payment for protein and butterfat encourages herd owners to select cows for high protein production.

T. A. MORRIS,
Chief, Dairy Division.