

The Case of the Disappearing Spuds

By DOUGLAS LARSEN
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WASHINGTON—(NEA)—All this meat—and no potatoes. That's a dinner table paradox U.S. housewives never thought they'd face



FOUR YEARS AGO surplus spuds bought by U.S. under price - support program piled up awaiting shipment to distilleries.



AGENCY LAKE
The Agency Lake 4-H Livestock Club held its regular May meeting at the home of Leslie Yeager. A new news reporter was elected. He is Leslie Yeager.

SHEEP BELLES AND BEAUX

Market lambs belonging to the Sheep Belles and Beaux of Keno-Fairhaven way were weighed by Mrs. Newhouse Saturday afternoon. Ellen Olson, club president, went along to help out. Ellen's bumper weighed 23 lbs. Denise Biewer has two bumper market lambs, one weighed 23 lbs. and the other 26 1/2 lbs. Raymond Piroger's ewe hasn't had her lamb yet. Tiny Colwell has a dandy Southdown lamb weighing 29 lbs. Eileen and Pat Fitzgerald haven't picked their market lambs out of their flocks yet. Dale Searcy isn't going to raise a market lamb this year, he's trading his buck lambs for ewes.

WOOD RIVER BEEF CLUB

The fourth meeting of the Wood River Beef Club was held at the home of Victor Sisson. Club members were shown Victor's calf the members were shown by Mr. Vaden how to make a simple rope halter out of one piece of rope.

MALIN BEEF CLUB

J. D. Vertrees and Earl Wilson weighed calves May 30. Vertrees was taking the place of Francis Skinner who was in Oklahoma. The calves weighed as follows: Norman Oliva 735, Norma Oliva 780, Jim Johnson 805 and 770, Bill Rajnus 790, Harry Wilson 745, Roxanne Wilson 775, Farrell Wilson 803, Kathleen Wilson 827, Diane Micka 885, Donnie Micka 808, Jimmy Par-

in this day of high meat prices. But as the result of a weird jumble of government price controls, \$500,000,000 potato subsidy programs, pork-raising incentive plans and misjudged crop estimates, this the No. 1 dilemma of housewives today.

You can get meat, plenty of it, if you want to pay the price. But the lowly potato, which the Department of Agriculture has been burying, drying and even giving away since 1946, has suddenly disappeared under the counter.

The Department of Agriculture's efforts to get farmers to raise more pigs boosted the U. S. meat supply during the first part of the year to a near record high. Sales hit 5537 million pounds. The amount of beef on the market is



FREE POTATOES were given away two years ago at relief centers when government decided to make the surplus available.

going to increase, too, from now until the end of the year.

But while the pigs were getting fat, the potatoes were shriveling. It looks now as if they'll stay that way until July, when the present



"BLUE-EYED potatoes were dyed that color in 1950 to keep surplus bought by government from being resold on market.

ker 645, Steven Schofield 550, Jerry Rajnus 685, Tommy Cantrell 560, and Rodney Lyon 710.

A meeting was held the next day at the home of Norma and Norman Oliva who gave a showmanship demonstration.

Refreshments were served by Mrs. Oliva.



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shortage should be over. Some experts, however, warn it may be worse again next year.

Housewives have to get up at the crack of dawn and rush down to the corner market before the meager supply of spuds is gone. What they're likely to wind up with, if they're on time, is a few tired-looking second-graders.

Marketmen, doing their morning produce shopping, find themselves in a similar spot.

A potato black market is flourishing. There are under-the-counter sales, over-charging, and lie-in sales. Grocers who want potatoes for their customers have to buy extra lots of non-scarce items. Potato prices are controlled. But those on produce in plentiful supply are not.

One tie-in ratio is three sacks of onions for each sack of potatoes. Another requires the purchase of coconuts left over from last Christmas.

In some places restaurants, which had been absorbing the black market prices, without raising menu prices, have stopped serving potatoes. Others have put them on the a la carte list.

The Office of Price Stabilization has put potato detectives to work to fight the black market, and so far has taken legal action against 50 of the country's big wholesale produce outfits. But it hasn't stopped the potato profiteers.

The government and the potato growers are bushels apart in their explanations as to the cause of the shortage and the future of the spud supply.

A Department of Agriculture potato expert blames Congress for the subsidy program which cost taxpayers half a billion dollars and created the fabulous surpluses of potatoes from 1949 through 1950.

Last year, the first without a subsidy, the USDA estimated the crop would be 335 million bushels, part of which would normally be stored for sale in 1952. Bad weather — and bad guessing — left the crop 10 million bushels less than the estimate.

The current shortage, the USDA expert says, is due to a combination of two things: The 10 million bushel shortage carried over from '51, and bad weather this winter in the southern states and California, which normally would have had their winter crops on the country's markets by May 1.

He says the present shortage will be licked by the 1st of July at the very latest and that there will not be one next year.

The potato growers blame the whole thing on OPS price controls which were slapped on potatoes



SPUD SNOOPS came on scene in 1952 as OPS agents, aided by cameras, try to put halt to black market in potatoes.

early in January.

A Potato Council spokesman claims that this discouraged southern growers from planting enough to relieve the approaching shortage.

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The council is urging Congress and OPS to take controls off of potatoes. This is the only thing which will inspire the northern growers to plant enough now to prevent a shortage next year, the spokesman claims.

He agrees with the USDA expert that the current shortage should be ended in July, and unless price restrictions are removed, he predicts, the U.S. in 1953 will have the smallest potato crop since 1867 and a real potato famine the next year.



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