

Cattle grading system

A new system of grading beef is bringing more lean meat into the Canadian marketplace and helping buyers to specify exactly what kind of meat they want. The new guidelines are based on maturity, meat and fat colouring, and marbling. Under the old system, choice cattle were bought at a "package" price averaging out the costs of lean and fat beef. Now wholesale buyers can purchase according to degree of carcass fat, paying higher prices for leaner carcasses, and consumers get more precisely what they prefer. For the producer, the new grading means shorter feeding periods and lower feed and labour costs.

The North west cuts forest fires

A new native (Eskimo and Indian) fire-fighting service in the Northwest Territories is given much of the credit for reducing losses caused by forest fires during 1972. The 72-man fire service was set up in June 1972 after disastrous experiences in 1971, the worst year on record for forest fires when six lives were lost. During 1972, no lives were lost and only 410,000 acres of woodlands in the Northwest Territories were destroyed by flames, compared with 2,000,000 acres the year before. The new service consists of nine eight-man crews, provided with helicopters and portable fire-fighting equipment. Stationed at key centres in the Mackenzie Valley and south of Great Slave Lake, the crews go on duty on a permanent basis through the summer and autumn forest fire season.

Office hours to suit

Employees can have a big say in their own working hours under a programme adopted by a Canadian life insurance firm in Toronto. The name of the game is Optime. The idea is similar to Flextime in Britain. Under the Canadian system, employees have three options. They can work an eight-hour day any time between 7 a.m. and 6 p.m.; four days of 8½ hours and one of 4½ hours; or eight days of 8½ hours and one of 9¼ hours with an extra full day off every two weeks. "The staff knows what suits them best, and we're going to accommodate them as far as possible," says Bill Lomax, recruitment director for the Manufacturers Life Insurance Company. The plan was to go into effect this spring. Employers expect it will help relieve rush-hour congestion and enable workers to conduct much of their personal business outside office hours.

Royal Visit

The Queen and Prince Philip are visiting Canada twice this summer.

They are scheduled to fly to Toronto on 25 June to begin an official visit that will take them to four provinces during a 10-day period. Between their arrival in Toronto and the end of June, they will tour ten communities in Ontario.

They fly then to Prince Edward Island to participate in its celebrations of the 100th anniversary of the province's entry into Canadian nationhood. The four days during which the Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh are in Prince Edward Island, Canada's smallest province just alongside the east coast, include a visit to an Acadian village.

From Prince Edward Island Her Majesty and His Royal Highness will fly to Regina, capital of the prairie province of Saskatchewan, to participate in a day of activities celebrating the 100th anniversary of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, who brought British-style law and order to the Canadian West. They will also spend a day in Calgary, Alberta, to take part in further celebrations of the RCMT centennial. The Calgary Stampede is honouring the RCMP anniversary and the Queen and Prince Philip were invited to join in these activities.

But perhaps an even more significant aspect of the Queen's Canadian activities during the summer is her plan to be in Ottawa for the opening days of the Commonwealth Heads of Government Conference.

It is the first time the Queen will have been present for a Commonwealth conference outside of London. She and Prince Philip will be in Ottawa from 31 July until 4 August. While there they will stay in Rideau Hall on the grounds of Government House.

It will also be the first time a Commonwealth conference of this stature has been held in Ottawa.

Igloolik research centre

A \$450,000 laboratory for scientific research is to be built in the heart of Canada's Eskimo country.

The circular structure, built round a 680-square-foot conference room, will be at Igloolik, the main Eskimo settlement in the eastern region of the Northwest Territories. The proposal for a research laboratory was approved by the Igloolik village council after discussions with the Canadian Government. All permanent posts except that of resident scientist are expected to be filled by local residents.

Two course schools

Some high (secondary) schools in Winnipeg, Manitoba, are experimenting with a system which involves most students taking only two courses a term. The school year is organised in three 13-week terms. Each day there are three two-hour periods interspersed with half-hour breaks. Students take two or at the most three courses. Results at one Winnipeg school, show a decline in absenteeism and failure rate. Teachers said one of the principal benefits of the new system is that it tends to "humanise" education. A teacher taking six or seven classes daily under the traditional system would come in contact with 180 to 200 students. There are seldom more than 60 to deal with on a personal level in the new approach. Criticisms are that students spend less time in school, tend to shun non-academic, non-compulsory courses and have difficulty in case of transfers from one school to another.

Natural gas conference

A total of 10 producing natural gas wells have been discovered in the Canadian Arctic islands and the search for more gas is continuing. The latest success was reported in May by the Northern Development Department, the arm of the Canadian Government that participates in Panarctic Oils Ltd. Panarctic is 45-per-cent owned by the Canadian Government; the other 55 per cent ownership is held by private companies in what is believed to be a relatively rare government-business partnership in natural resource development in an isolated and difficult area. The latest Panarctic well has a confirmed flow of 55 million cubic feet per day. It was drilled on Ellef Ringnes Island but at an angle that hit the gas reservoir about a half-mile offshore. It is the fifth significant gas field Panarctic has found thus far.

Snowmobiles preferred

Some Eskimos in Canada's eastern Arctic are having second thoughts about hunting with snowmobiles. Since hunters in the Grise Fiord region started using snowmobiles, expenses have soared from £572 in 1967, when dog teams were last used, to £1,846 last winter. The estimates were made by Dr. Rick Riewie, a university teacher who lived at Grise Fiord on Ellesmere Island. The sledge dogs were fed on waste meat and also provided companionship for the hunters on long, lonely trips. When a snowmobile breaks down, it provides no warmth for a hunter stranded in Arctic cold. Still, word from Grise Fiord is that the Eskimos will likely stick to the machines. Dog-sledding may have been more romantic, but they say it also made for a far more rugged life than hunting by snowmobile - a ruggedness the hunters are just as happy to leave in the past.