

# Nationwide farmers' strike shows little effect locally

By John Ortmann

The American Agriculture farm strike showed little if any effect on agricultural buying and selling on its first day, according to two people involved in farm product marketing.

The nationwide farm group plans to discontinue buying and selling farm products and supplies until market demand or government action raises farm prices to the break-even point. Backers say the strike, which began yesterday, will last until this happens.

Homer Rogers, president and general manager of Omaha Livestock, a livestock commission firm at Omaha's Union Stockyards, said Wednesday's receipts of slaughter cattle were normal.

Rogers said the Omaha market received 3,800 cattle for slaughter yesterday compared to 4,500 a week ago and 3,600 a year ago.

Hog and sheep runs showed similar trends, Rogers said, with hogs closing \$1 higher. He expects the rise in hog prices to bring increased supplies of hogs to the market, blotting out any effects of the strike.

### Market statistics

The 11 major United States markets had 42,000 slaughter cattle yesterday, he said, compared to 37,300 last week and 42,000 a year ago.

"This is what we would have had regardless of the holding action," Rogers said.

Janet Bridger, who with her husband Jack owns the Denton grain elevator, said at noon Wednesday business was normal.

Bridger said she noticed an increase in buying and selling by farmers before the strike, which she said was a means of surviving during the holding action.

Strike support in the Denton area is mixed, she said, with many farmers in sympathy with the strike but unable to support it because of large debts.

### Elevator open

The Bridgers considered closing the elevator Wednesday to support the strike, but remained open to serve non-striking farmers.

Winter is a good time to have a farm strike because grain crops are already sold or are sealed under government loans and can not be sold, according to Everett Peterson, UNL professor of agricultural economics.

Also, farmers are not doing field work and so do not need to buy fuel, fertilizer and other growing supplies, he said.

Peterson said he knows of no calculations as to how much farm produce would need to be withheld before prices rise. However, he said he expects no major effects unless the 1978 crop is not planted next spring. He does

not think that will happen, however.

Slaughter livestock and milk cannot easily be withheld because milk is perishable and livestock continue to gain weight, further depressing the market when they are sold, Peterson said.

### No sales increase

Rogers also expects no decrease in livestock sales, explaining that there are seven percent more cattle on feed in the United States than there were a year ago.

When these cattle are finished, they must be marketed, he said.

This surplus means that if some cattle are withheld, enough others exist to fill demands, he said.

The strike will be effective only as an attention-getter, Rogers thinks. He added that politicians will not respond to farmer's demands. The number of consumer votes so far outnumbers farm votes that politicians will favor consumer interests, he said.

Rogers predicts stores will use the strike as an excuse to raise the retail price of meat even though the price paid to farmers will not rise.

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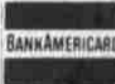

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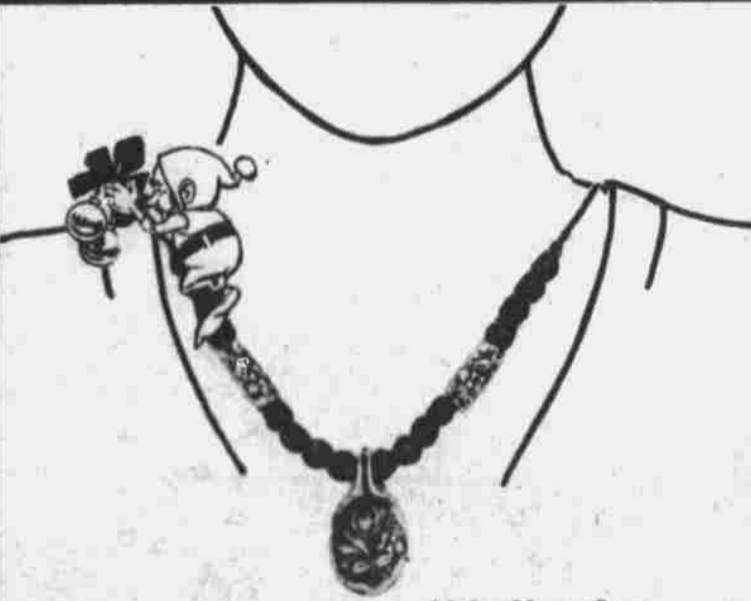
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