

# Poor Weather May Cut Apple Yield



Local apple grower Al Ferri checks growth.

Assessment may not be the only problem apple growers in the Huttonville area have to contend with this year according to orchard operator Al Ferri who says that poor weather conditions in the spring may have led to poor pollination of the apple blossoms which could mean a poorer than usual crop. Mr. Ferri said it was too early in the season to estimate just how good the crop will be even though there was a good heavy bloom on the trees.

He said the success of the crop would depend on the "June drop" the period when apples that have not been properly pollinated lack the strength to remain on the tree and drop to the ground.

He explained that cool weather during the bloom period may have kept bee activity down. The orchard operators depend on the bee to pollinate the blossoms even though the wind does the job to some extent.

If pollination is not complete the apples will form but will not "set" and will fall off the tree.

He said there will be an indication of how the crop is faring at a meeting of orchard operators later in the month. He said there are lots of apples on the trees and they look good "but that doesn't mean they will stay."

**ANOTHER PROBLEM**  
Mr. Ferri said another problem apple growers face is the market which operates on a "free trading base across the world." He said this means Canadian apple growers have no protection from apples from other countries flooding the market and cutting the price down.

"I would like to see us have an organization like the milk marketing board or the Egg board to restrict the flow of outside produce into the province," he said.

He said outside importation of produce has always "been the curse" of fruit and vegetable growers. "No other commodity is imported on this free trade basis," he said.

He said there are not government regulations to stop foreign growers from flooding the Ontario market when local crops are ready, thus dropping the price.

"They sell at any price as they have to get rid of the produce," says Mr. Ferri. "By this time they have got all they want in the way of profits by selling when local crops were not available. They can afford to just get rid of their excess at any price."

**LOW PRICE**  
Mr. Ferri said there was nothing the growers could do about this as the consumer demands produce at a low price. He said that if apple growers applied costs to end product nobody could afford to buy apples.

He said people think the growers are getting big profits "we're not. The farmer today

produces more and more and eats less and less for it.

He said industry was in a different position they could store manufactured goods until the market was right or just close down their production lines.

"You can't tell an apple tree to stop growing fruit because the market is down. You have to get rid of the produce when it is ready."

He blamed supermarkets and chain stores with the high cost of produce. They have to keep those nice beautiful stores going, they have to pay the staff and keep the lights burning."

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**PEST CONTROL**  
Insect and blight control is yet another problem faced by fruit growers.

Mr. Ferri said these things are always a problem and always will be. It is up to the individual grower to handle these problems as they rise.

He says he does not see any particular problem this year as most growers are involved in spraying programs to stop fungus and insects from attacking the fruit. "The cost however is fantastic," he says.

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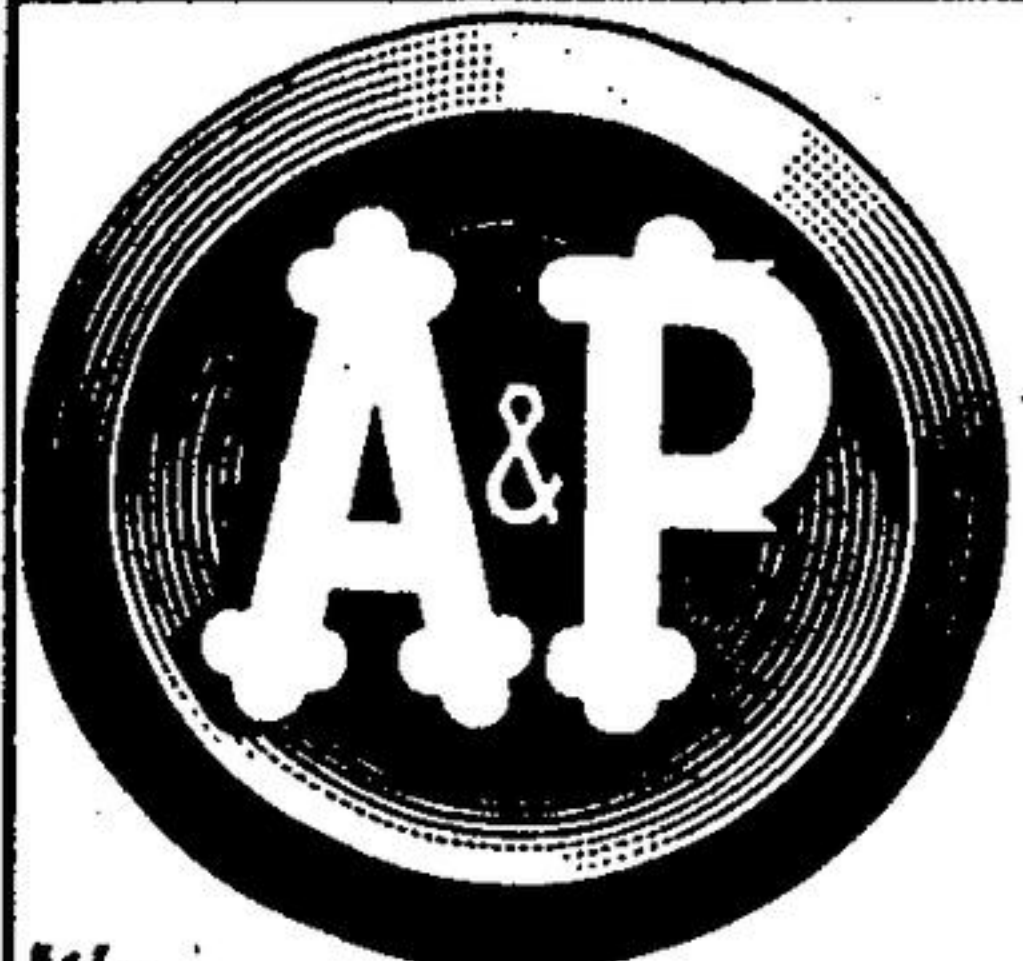
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**French Fries** 5-lb pkg 75c

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