Soybean Oil "Dustproofs" Ground Feed

"You have to see it to believe it. It reduces dust in confinement buildings at least 80%," says Illinois hog producer C. David Tiedemann, of Belleville, who "dustproofs" ground feed by lacing it with soybean oil

He pieced together a low-cost dispenser made up from an electric solenoid valve that cuts in whenever the motor on his Mix-Mill grinder starts up, some plastic tubing and a 2.5 gal. plastic jug. The device automatically drips soybean oil onto corn as it's ground at the rate of 1.5 gal. per ton of feed. "It reduces clouds of dust to a small puff when grinding, and when dumping feed into self-feeders," says Tiedemann. "If the dispenser happens to run out of oil, I can tell immediately by the amount of dust that boils up when reloading feeders."

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"Future Lies In Bunker Silos"

For cost efficiency and reducing nutrient loss from field to feeding, it's hard to beat bunker silos, according to Dr. Larry Satter, dairy scientist and acting director at the USDA's Dairy Forage Research Center, at Prairie du Sac, Wis.

"We're going to see a lot more of these," Satter told farmers at a recent field day. "I'm not sure how we got so dependent on tower silos. It's a tradition. But right now it's getting to be a costly tradition. If managed properly, bunker silos offer the opportunity to put up silage faster, at a higher moisture content, and with less loss of feed value.

"There's no doubt you can make good silage, at low loss, in bunker silos," says Dr. Satter. But he adds that good management is essential to the success of horizontal storage. Should a farmer find that impossible, Dr. Satter recommends against using bunkers.

"Good management," he explains, "means packing continuously and well during filling. It also means covering the bunker immediately after filling with heavy plastic."

Dr. Satter notes that, when considering the cost of an unloader, maintenance and the structure itself, cost savings of 40 to 50% can be realized for larger bunkers over tower silos of similar capacity. "The bigger the bunker, the greater the savings," says Dr. Satter, who stresses that "farmers must match bunker size to their herds so they're able to feed off a minimum of 6 in. of silage each day."

He Puts His ATV To Work

"It's amazing how fast you can work with an ATV compared to a tractor. It's also a lot cheaper to operate," says Vince Koebensky, Buffalo, Minn., who's come up with a couple new chores for his Honda 3-wheeler.

He drags 1 1/2 sections of spike tooth harrow through pastures. "It levels gopher mounds, busts up horse droppings, and prepares pastures for spring growth. It also does a good job smoothing out muddy roads since the ATV can walk through them without doing more damage."

Koebensky also built a flotation trailer for his ATV built from an old Hesston articulated commercial mower and pulled by a ball hitch he mounted on an add-on frame at the rear. "It already had turf tires so I only had to add a tongue. We use it to haul nearly everything but it works especially well for picking rocks in fields. You can pick rocks right from the seat if you're alone."

"Odd Hour" Milking Pays Off

Around the time most dairy operators are eating their noonday meal, Dave Siegmann and his team are into their morning milking. And when most dairy producers are fast asleep, Dave and his crew are deep into their evening milking.

The Siegmann operation, near Rubicon, Wis., milks at 11 a.m. and 11 p.m. "It gives us more time with our families and more time to participate in church and community activities," Dave says. "My wife Laurie and I have a two-year-old son Brandon, and I enjoy playing with him in the evening. He goes to bed at 7 p.m., and if we were milking at 5 p.m. I wouldn't have that time with him. Sure, you can bring your children to the barn with you while milking, but that's not the same as devoting some 100% time to them."

Now, Dave also is able to be a youth director at his church — an activity that begins at 6:30.

Cows take to the 11 and 11 schedule, too. "They're totally confined so it doesn't make any difference to them when they're milked so long as it's twice a day on a consistent schedule," Dave says. "They have artificial light 24 hours a day and can always see to eat. Our system might be a problem if the cows were on pasture." **(Ron Brunoehler, Dairy Today).**

FARM SHOW "Best Ideas"

Editor's Note: *Have you got a "best idea" you'd like to share with FARM SHOW readers? It might be a new wrinkle in cropping, livestock, machinery or whatever. Maybe it's still experimental but looks promising. Or, maybe you've already proven it works. We'd like to hear about it. Write to: Best Ideas, c/o FARM SHOW, P.O. Box 1029, Lakeville, Minn. 55044.*

Harvest Corn In The Spring?

If you've ever toyed with the idea of letting corn stand in the field over winter to let Mother Nature dry and store it, you'll get a lot of encouragement from Richard Hagen, Olivia, Minn., an 80-acre hobby farmer and ridge-till enthusiast.

A year ago this fall, his corn crop was high in moisture. Instead of going through the hassle and expense of running it through a dryer, into storage and then back out again in the spring for delivery to the local elevator, he decided to let the crop stand in the field over winter and then harvest it, hopefully, in early April.

Fortunately, last winter was one of the mildest ever in Minnesota and Hagen's corn crop "survived" with excellent standability and ear retention — despite the fact that he'd planted about one-third of the acreage to 90-day maturity seed.

Thanks to an early spring, he was able to harvest the crop April 1 when temperatures were in the low 20's and there was just enough frost to carry the combine.

Average yield was 133.3 bu. per acre. Moisture content was right at 15% and field loss averaged only 7%. Adding up the pluses and minuses, Hagen figures he netted an extra $30/A by letting the crop overwinter in the field. Here's how it penciled out:

On the plus side, he saved $33.33/A in storage cost (he doesn't have grain storage facilities) figured at 25 cents/bu. and $24.66/A in drying costs (18 cents/bu.). On the minus side, since standing corn doesn't qualify for CCC loan, the opportunity cost of lost interest was $11.66 (133.3 bu. times $1.75 loan rate times 10% interest for 6 months). The 7% field loss translated to a cost of $16.45 (9.4 bu. at the $1.75/bu. loan rate).

The final tally: $29.88 or right at $30/A net advantage for spring over fall harvested corn.

Last spring, intending to repeat his spring harvesting experiment, Hagen planted two Keltgen hybrids especially noted for their excellent stalk quality and ear retention. However, with the unusually long growing season, his 1987 corn crop had field dried to 15% by Oct. 1 so he decided to go ahead with conventional fall harvesting and storage. "I'm convinced, nonetheless, that there's a real place for spring harvesting and I'm keepng it open as a viable alternative for future years," Hagen told FARM SHOW.

Contact: Richard Hagen, Box 124, Olivia, Minn. (ph 612 523-1716).

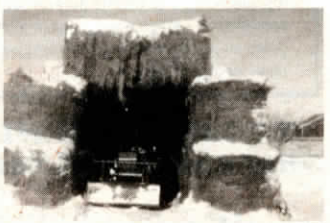

Photo courtesy GRAINEWS

Round Bale Shed

Canadian Phil Wimmer built a winter storage shed for his chore tractor from round bales. He says it worked great and cost nothing to build since he fed the bales out in the spring.

The Beaubier, Sask., farmer built the walls of the shed by stacking bales two high along the side. To form the roof he ran poles across the walls and laid bales end-to-end across them. The opening faces south to capture as much warmth from the sun as possible.

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