

# Tobacco Seedbed Care Outlined By M. M. Smith

By: M. M. Smith, County Agent

The specialized job of seeding tobacco beds is facing many tobacco growers throughout Lancaster County. Proper seedbed care is essential for the production of a good supply of healthy tobacco plants when needed for transplanting. Extra care and attention in the seedbed will mean stronger plants and reduced disease trouble after transplanting in the field.

Growers who steam their beds in the fall usually can get their seeding done earlier in the spring and have plants ready for transplanting before the spring sterilized beds are in production. Also the fall steamed beds have more time to regain the normal physical properties of the soil.

Growers planning to sterilize their beds as soon as the ground dries off are urged to plow down well-rotted manure rather than fresh manure, and apply the fertilizer to the beds before steaming. A complete tobacco grade fertilizer is recommended in limited quantities. Applications of 4-8-12 or 5-10-15 at the rate of 8 to 10 pounds per 1000 square feet of bed area along with the manure should provide sufficient plant food.

With spring steaming where manure and fertilizer have been applied prior to steaming, it is important to delay the seeding of the beds

for at least 7 to 10 days after steaming; this gives the soil a little time to get back to normal and permits some of the excess ammonia nitrogen, released through steaming, to escape.

When raking the beds after steaming operation, growers should exercise caution by not raking deeper than 1 to 2 inches; this is to eliminate the possibility of bringing healthy weed seeds to the surface.

The rate of seeding of the beds is often the start of future disease and plant problems. Beds that are too thick will be bothered more with diseases and have more spindly plants. The recommended rate is about one ounce of cleaned seed for each 1200 square feet of bed (24 pans). Or in smaller terms, one ounce of tobacco seed is a level tablespoon and not mounded or heaped to get a full measure. The seed may be sown wet or dry with similar results.

After seeding with the dry method, many growers will tamp or firm the seedbox in order to get quicker contact between the seeds and the soil. The next step is to apply a mulch in order to keep the muslin off the ground and to hold moisture. Clean straw, sterilized hog bristles, or cottonseed hulls are commonly used.

Muslin should then be applied and pinned down to the ground. Many growers prefer new muslin for the best plants, if old muslin is used it should be soaked in a formaldehyde solution (one pint of 40% formaldehyde in 30 gallons of water) for at least 15 minutes and allowed to dry before putting on the beds. This is to control diseases and especially mosaic.

If bed boards are used to frame the beds, these also should be washed with the formaldehyde solution before using.

The final step in the seeding operation is to apply a soil drench to prevent wildfire and damping-off diseases; this may be done before the muslin is put down on the day of seeding or when the first plants appear, through the ground. Use either the Bordeaux mixture — 8-4-100, or 50% Fixed Copper at the rate of 4 lbs. in 100 gallon of water. With either material use 28 gallons per 1000 square feet of bed area.

# S.P.A.B.C. Leads State Co-ops For First Time

University Park, Pa., March 30—For the first time in the history of the Pennsylvania Artificial Breeders Cooperatives, the Southeastern Unit at Landisville led all other units in the number of cows bred last year.

Technicians at the Lancaster County stud bred a total of 144,203 cows during the year. Second was Western at Clarion, where 140,658 cows were serviced. Others in order of services were Nepa at Tuckhannock, 106,802; First Penna at Lewisburg, 57,565, and Lehigh Valley at Allentown, 34,075.

Now starting its twentieth year, Pennsylvania's farmer cooperative program in dairy artificial breeding was credited with four new high achievements at the annual meeting of the State Association this week.

Harvey E. Shaffer, extension dairy specialist at Penn State University, summarizing the work of five sire centrals, said breeding efficiency rose to 78.7 per cent in 1960, 8 per cent higher than 1959, for the highest mark in the history of this work in Pennsylvania. This statewide average in breeding efficiency was reported higher than for natural service.

Also, Shaffer said, for the 19th consecutive year there was a gain in cows bred, from 463,503 in 1959 to 483,303, an increase of 19,800 or

4.3 per cent. Among breeds, Holsteins led with 319,303, for a gain of 17,143, or 5.7 per cent. Next were Guernsey's, 62,235; Jerseys, 21,260; Ayrshire 8,560, only other dairy breed to show a gain — .4 per cent and Brown Swiss, 4,639. Cows bred to beef bulls totaled 66,776, a gain of 10.6 per cent.

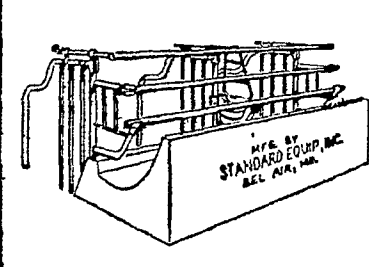
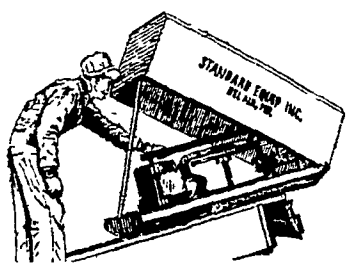
Two speakers, Helm H. Hulbert, U. S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D. C., and William H. Johnson, Farm Credit Banks, of Baltimore, both urged directors of the five central cooperatives and forty county units to discharge their full responsibilities as the best assurance their organizations will continue to function vigorously and effectively.

## GROWTH CHAMBERS AID STUDIES

Specially designed growth chambers, allowing 12-month studies of growing plants, are in use by the Agricultural Experiment Station at the Pennsylvania State University. The growth chambers permit a wide range of environment by the push of a button. Year-round studies are made of the effect of light, temperature, and humidity on plant disease production processes.

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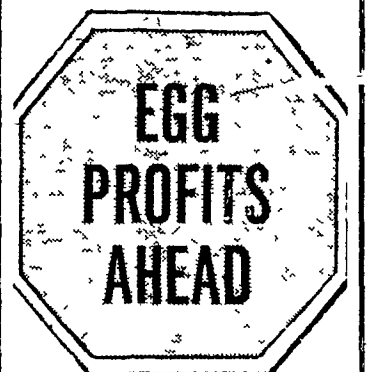
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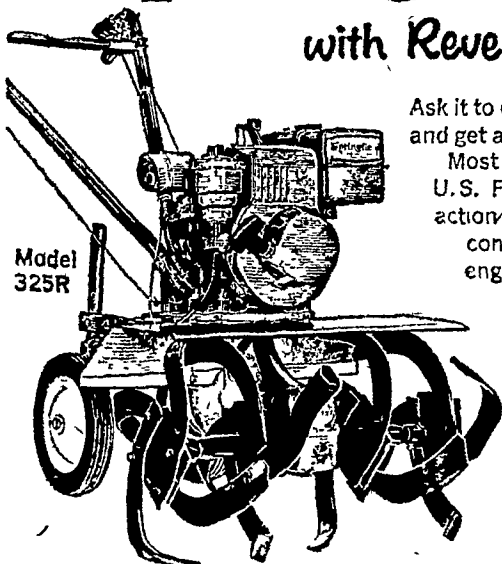


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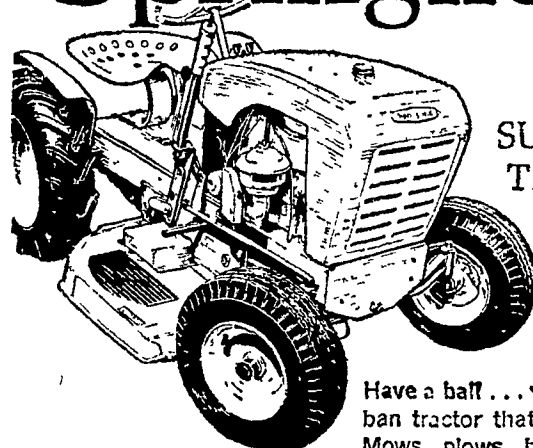
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