

Self Propelled Camera Inspects Drainage Lines

An experimental camera that can propel itself through underground drainage lines to locate damaged or clogged tiles has been devised by a U.S. Department of Agriculture engineer.

The new camera, designed as a research tool by Hollis Shull of USDA's Agricultural Research Service at Brawley, California, can be used to inspect a much greater length of tile than is possible when a random tile is excavated and examined. The camera can be inserted at the drainage outlet or at any point along a line where a tile is exposed by excavation.

Further studies are planned using this drain-line camera as a research tool. These studies may show that the device can help farmers find clogged spots in their drainage systems without the expense of excavating the lines. In many cases, only a few tiles may need replacing, but farmers have to dig up entire lines to find where clogging occurs.

The experimental device consists of a 35mm camera and

electronic flash installed in a clear plastic tube about 3 inches in diameter and 16 inches long. The tube is mounted on two wide wheels, one at each

end. A small, reversible, battery-operated motor geared to the rear wheel moves the tube through the tile line.

Controls for the camera and motor remain above ground and are connected to the tube by a cable. Using these con-

trols, the cameraman operates the camera and flash device, advances the film, and moves the tube forward or backward in the tile line. Plastic tabs on distance the camera tube has moved into the drain.

Pictures taken by the camera can show roots in drainage lines, gravel at the tile joints, and misalignment of individual tiles. In some drainage research, color photographs can be useful by showing the distinctive colors of various oxide deposits in the tiles.

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