

Lancaster Farming

VOL. 18 No. 17

Lancaster Farming, Saturday, March 17, 1973

\$2.00 Per Year



Lancaster Farming Photo

Mr. and Mrs. Robert Armstrong, with their son Kevin, are shown in a grass waterway on their Liberty Square farm. The Armstrongs received the Outstanding Cooperator award Tuesday night from the Lancaster County Conservation District.

Armstrongs Hailed By Conservationists

The farm that conservationists dream about is for sale. It's in southern Lancaster County's Liberty Square, and it's owned by Mr. and Mrs. Robert Armstrong. Proof that the farm is an excellent example of conservation at work is the fact that the Armstrongs received the Lancaster County Conservation District's Outstanding Cooperator award for 1973. The award, in the form of a framed aerial photograph of the farm taken by Grant Heilman, was presented to the Armstrongs on Tuesday night at the annual Conservation District banquet in Mt. Joy.

The farm, which Armstrong operated actively until the end of last year, has been in his family for three generations. After 17 busy years as a farmer, Armstrong has decided it's time for a

Farm Calendar

Saturday, March 17

9 a.m. - 3 p.m. — Ayrshire Barn meeting, Jim Martin farm, Stevens

Pennsylvania Yorkshire Cooperative Association Inc. Invitational Show and Sale, Farm Show Building, Harrisburg; Show, 10 a.m.; Sale, 1 p.m.

Joint State Conservation Commission and State Association of Conservation District Directors Inc. meeting, State College.

(Continued on Page 21)

change. And when Bob Armstrong makes up his mind, he makes up his mind.

He made up his mind in 1962 to install conservation practices on his farm. He started with contour strips. When the county Soil and Conservation Service advised him to keep much of his hilly land in grass or else put in diversion terraces and waterways, he made up his mind to go all the way.

It took five years to finish the terraces and waterways, but Armstrong feels it was well worth the effort. Last year, out of 90 tillable acres, he had over 70 acres in corn. While floods and torrential rains were washing away farms all over the Northeast, the Armstrongs were merely seeing more water in their sod waterways. Clear water.

Conservation not only saved Armstrong's soil, it enabled him to grow more corn. He had been raising 600 to 800 market hogs a year, and there were good financial reasons for growing all the corn he could.

Four acres in sod waterways are not wasted acres, either, Armstrong notes. Every year, he gets a good crop of hay, "Very good horse hay," he says, from his waterways. And the crop gets better every year.

Armstrong now feels that he's faced the challenges of farming,

(Continued on Page 25)

Use Value Assessment For Farms Examined

Taxing farmland on the basis of its value for production agriculture is unconstitutional now in Pennsylvania. This could change, though, after the May 15 primary ballot if Commonwealth voters approve a referendum which would amend the constitution.

Should the referendum pass, the state legislature will be empowered to pass laws allowing municipalities to grant preferential tax treatment to agricultural land. Area farmers have been asking how this could affect them, and learned about some of the possibilities at a meeting Wednesday night at the Farm and Home Center.

The educational meeting, sponsored by the Farm and Home Foundation, attracted several hundred farmers, environmentalists and government officials. It was the most suc-

cessful such meeting yet conducted by the Foundation.

The group listened attentively to Dr. Donald J. Epp, a Penn State agricultural economist, who reported on a study he had made of the effects of use value assessment in other states, and its possible effects in Pennsylvania.

Epp pointed out that the referendum will only decide the constitutional issue. It will not determine the statutes which could be implemented as a result of the vote. The state legislature would have to hammer out the laws and so far as Epp knows, no legislative bodies have yet started to think about the kind of laws that might be passed.

The breaks could go either way for farmers in Lancaster County if agriculture land is to be assessed on its use rather than its market value.

An assessment program that considers soil types and a farm's proximity to agricultural markets could raise taxes on county farms an average of \$1,000 a farm, according to Epp.

"While taxes would increase immediately on some farms that increase would look small when compared to a tax rate based on the farm's potential value for development," Epp said.

Lancaster was one of eight counties selected for his study.

In Bucks and Chester counties were recent reassessments have taken farm taxes up as much as 300 per cent, the study showed taxes would be reduced on nearly every farm.

Dr. Epp said an agricultural-use assessment would benefit farmers more in future years as each new reassessment is made.

He noted that in New Jersey

(Continued On Page 13)

Farmer Seminar Studies Liquid Manure Systems

"Farmers are luckier, in a way, than most industries," Roger Grout told an animal waste seminar on Tuesday at the Farm and Home Center. "A farmer can recycle his biggest waste product, manure, simply by spreading it in his fields."

Grout, from the Penn State Extension Service, was the main speaker for the seminar, sponsored by Zimmerman Industries, Inc., Ephrata R1. His comments dealt chiefly with liquid manure handling systems.

"The trend today is towards putting a lot of animals in one

place," Grout noted. "In dairy operations, this means we've got to contend with waste water from washing operations as well as animal wastes. We somehow have to control these wastes to prevent pollution, and to preserve the soil nutrients that are in manure."

Grout suggested that the best way to solve manure problems especially in free-stall dairying operations, is to mix it with the waste water, store as a liquid and spread it when the soil is active.

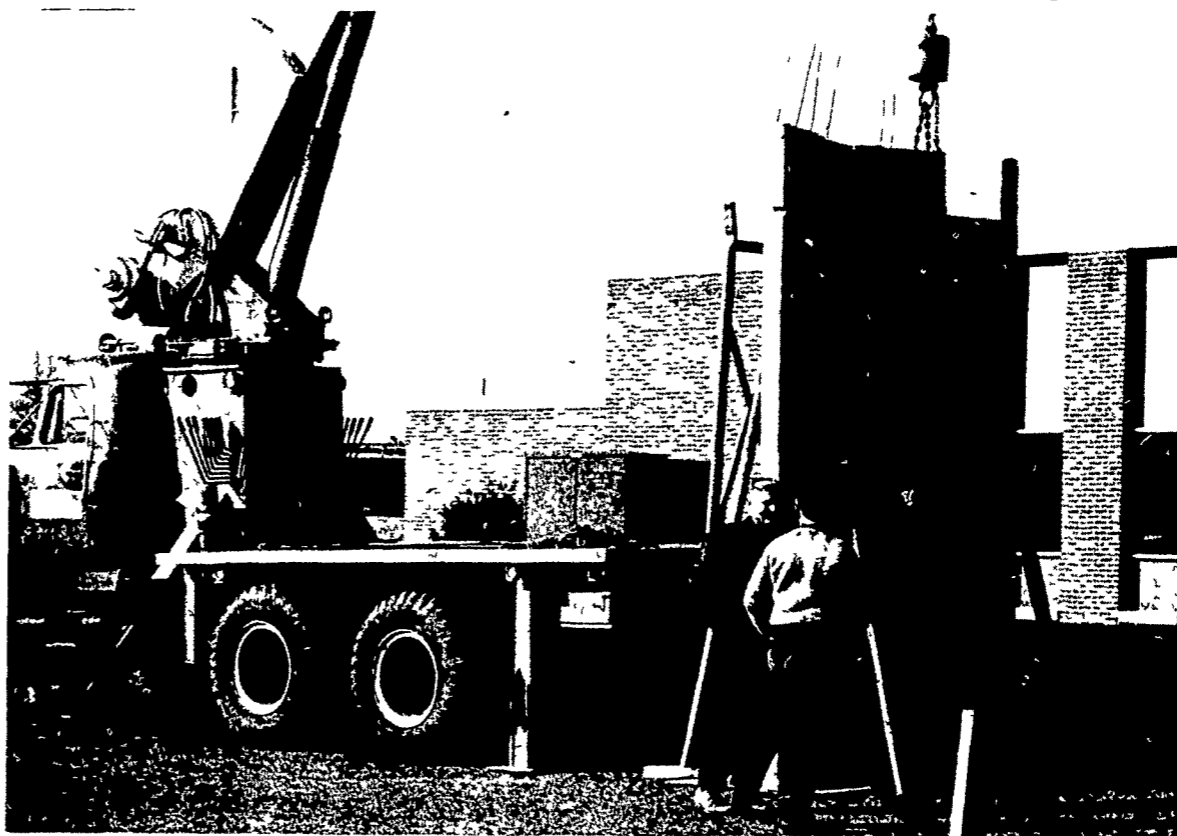
The most practical method locally for storing liquid manure

would appear to be deep storage pits, according to Grout. These pits can be located directly below barns with slatted floors, an arrangement which is used mostly in close confinement beef operations.

Storage pits for free stall dairy barns are usually located outside the barn. The barns are cleaned frequently, and the waste is pushed directly into the pits with scrapers.

Farmers with stanchion barns might also be able to use a liquid manure storage system. Here,

(Continued on Page 20)



Lancaster Farming Photo

Two farmers stopped to chat by a cross-section of a liquid manure storage pit displayed outside the Farm and Home

Center during Tuesday's animal waste seminar.