

A test frame at the National Tillage Machinery Laboratory, Athens, Alabama, holds a pneumatic track designed for farm equipment. The track reportedly performed better than a regular

pneumatic tire, and almost as well as a steel track in use tests. The track has a ground contact area of 6.3 inches by 55 inches, and stands 4.5 feet high.

Pneumatic Track Outperforms Tire

An experimental pneumatic track for farm equipment performs better than a pneumatic tire and almost as well as a steel track, according to a recent USDA Study.

The pneumatic track, which is of Italian origin, was tested by agricultural engineers James H. Taylor and Eddie C. Burt of the National Tillage Machinery Laboratory at Auburn, Ala. It performed on a nearly equal basis with the steel

track in two tests and outperformed the steel track and pneumatic tire in soil pressure tests.

Taylor said the pneumatic track has potential for high-speed use in the field and on hard-surfaced roads proved past, steel tracks proved superior to pneumatic tires in traction; their use, however, was restricted because of slow speed, rough ride, high initial and maintenance costs, and their prohibition on hard-surface roads.

Both types of tracks outperformed the pneumatics tire in tests of dynamic traction ratio (pull-weight) and tractive efficiency on wet and dry Norfolk Sandy Loam and Decatur Clay Loam soils.

The pneumatic track, however, outperformed both the steel track and the pneumatic tire in soil pressure tests. The total soil contact area was identical for the pneumatic tire and the pneumatic track. The long, narrow ground contact area of the track offers two distinct advantages toward solving two problems that increasingly concern many farmers. The track disturbs a smaller area of soil on each pass through the field, and the soil pressures and bulk densities are lower, Taylor said. Pressure measurements were made at

a depth of 20 centimeters under each contact area.

"The disadvantages of tracks for today's typical farm application are many and real," Dr. Taylor said. "However, their field traction performance is so superior that the track concept cannot be relegated to the junk heap. The pneumatic track concept has the potential for combining many of the desirable features of pneumatic tires, resulting in a traction device superior to anything now available."

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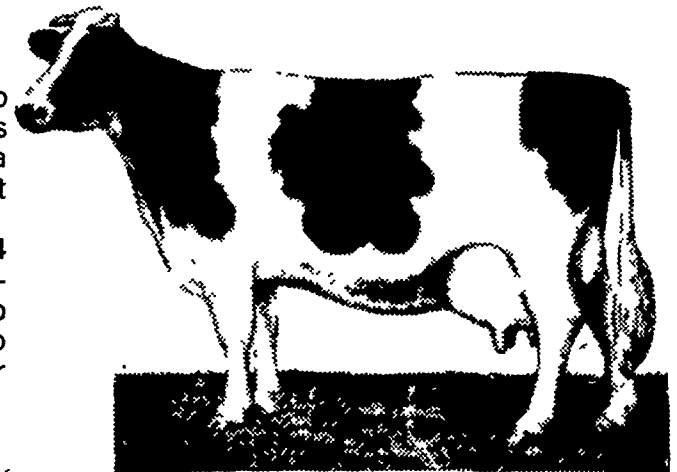
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