



Besides fulfilling many needs of a farmer, the farm pond adds too the beauty of the land.

Farm ponds fill farmer needs in many forms

HARRISBURG — The robbers - erosion and wet areas - pose a greater threat to the farmer than the human kind because they steal his most precious possession, land.

Just as the police can deter theft, so can the farm pond control water runoff and drainage problems, and provide a few added bonuses as well.

Building a farm pond is more complicated than filling a hole with water, but not too involved that the small farmer cannot undertake it with the aid of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Soil Conservation Service.

Slight erosion may be indicative of substantial water runoff, an important element in choosing a watershed that will keep the pond filled. One should avoid severely

eroded areas because the pond would rapidly fill with silt. In such cases, the only solution would be to institute conservation measures before excavating.

Small springs or seeps, usually a nuisance, provide the best source of water. Farmers should avoid streams draining large watersheds because they will necessitate elaborate and expensive dams to handle the frequent flooding.

SCS points out that the best ponds are created in forested lands and permanent grasslands. If such areas are not available, the alternative is cultivated areas protected by conservation practices, such as contour tillage, strip-cropping or terracing.

Of course, nobody need tell the farmer that ideal condi-

tions are the exception rather than the rule in his line of work. However, a meager water supply or small watershed can be remedied with proper techniques.

Grassed waterways, terracing and underground tile all can be utilized to bring water from other areas and, perhaps, correct other drainage problems in the bargain.

While ponds assist in protecting the environment, there is a decidedly economic side to the benefits gained by the farmer.

For instance, ponds can provide water for livestock in their own grazing areas. Beef, dairy cattle and horses require about 15 gallons per day per head, according to SCS.

In recent years, the pond has become an important source of water for irrigation, particularly in the eastern states, devoid of the complex water systems of the West. Before the 1940's, irrigation was not used in the humid East, but today many farmers, with small acreage and high-value crops, are irrigating, SCS says.

Other practical considerations include using the water for orchard and field spray-

ing, a refuge for waterfowl, fire protection and fish production. The latter concept could yield the pond's owner from 100 to 300 pounds of fish annually for each acre of water surface.

One other aspect of owning a pond should not be overlooked. A small, clean body of water can provide hours of pleasure with boating, swimming and

fishing for a farm family right at home.

What's all this cost? PLICA says the following are reasonable costs the farmer can expect from contractors: earthmoving, 50 cents per cubic yard; diversions, 50 to 60 cents per linear foot; underground drainage, 40 to 50 cents per linear foot, and grassed waterways, 90 cents to \$1 per foot constructed.



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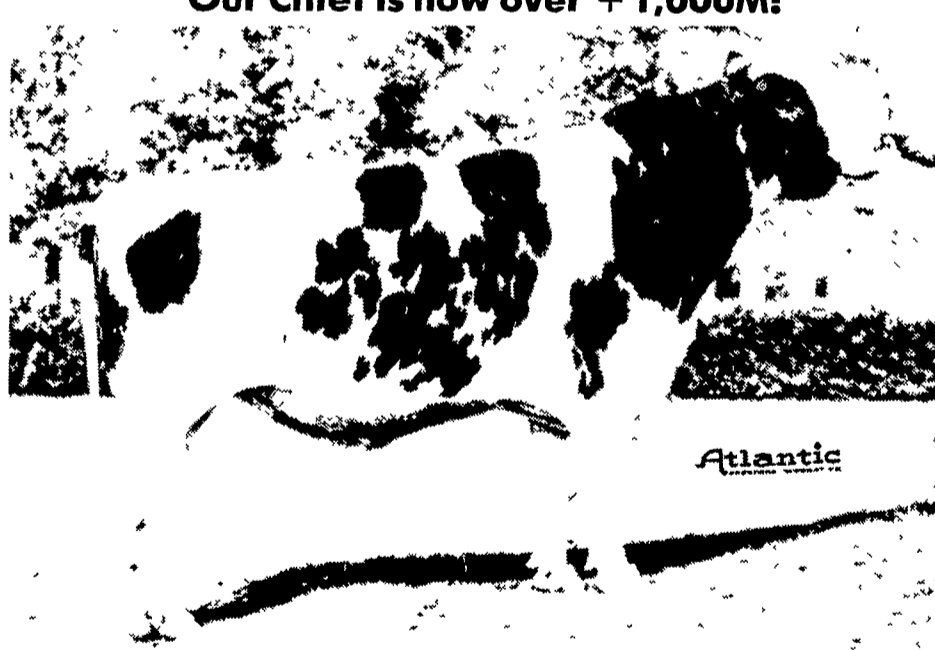
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