

Extra cost sharing money helps farm operation

BY CURT HARLER
MANHEIM — Special federal funds have helped Allen and Wilmer Groff, R 4 Manheim, make some fairly impressive improvements around their dairy operation.

In addition to a pair of watering troughs which will provide all the drinking water their 70 cow Holstein herd needs, they have a brand new manure holding facility that will eliminate those daily trips over their fields with a spreader.

Part of the funding for the Groffs' project comes from special government funds available to farmers in the Chickies Creek watershed area.

The project, administered

by Soil Conservation Service, was established to help improve hydrologic conditions in the watershed.

But for the Groffs, the project will make a big difference in their daily work routines.

The two watering troughs are part of a spring development on the farm.

For years, Allen Groff recalls, the piece between the lane and the barn, was wet.

"It used to be all swamp here," he says.

The Groffs, with help from Scott Eberly of the Soil Conservation Service, drained the area and put in a holding tank uphill from the present location of the two troughs.

Two lines run out of the holding tank, one to each of the watering troughs.

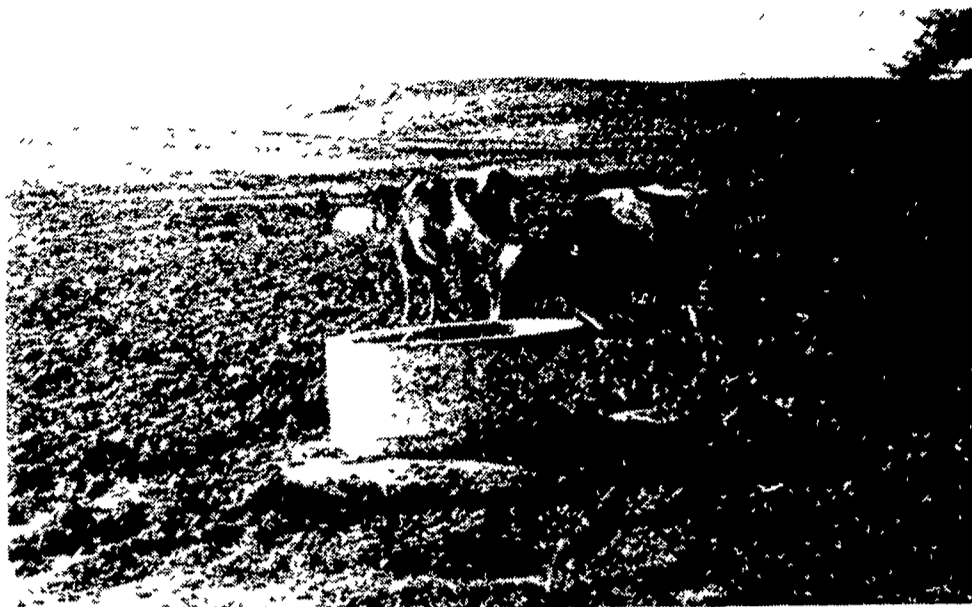
SCS figures a healthy dairy cow needs about 25 gallons fresh water a day. For a beef animal the figure is about 15 gallons.

Groffs knew they would have no problem with sufficient water for the troughs.

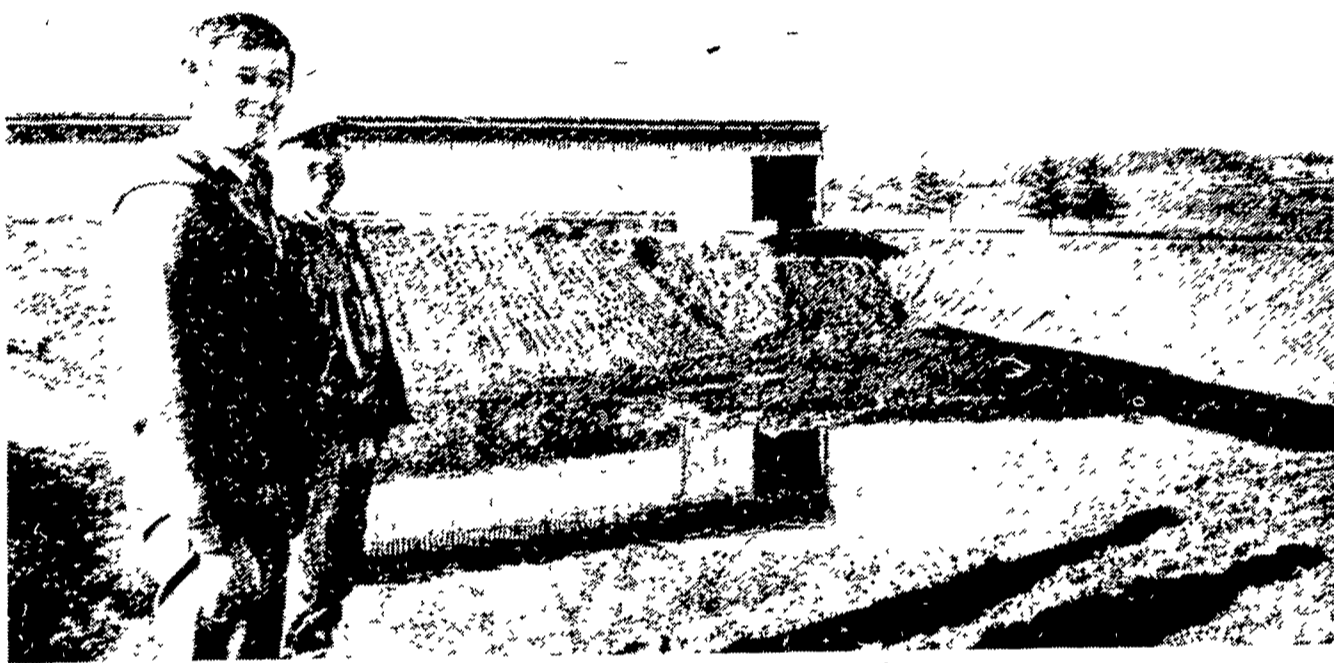
Estimated minimum production for the lower trough is 5000 gallons per day. The upper waterer will produce something over half of that amount.

"I don't think we'll ever run out of water," Wilmer says.

The only problem they encountered was a thick formation of algae which



Water troughs from the Groff's spring development project will provide water both for dry cows here and for the milking herd in another pasture.



Behind Wilmer, left, and Allen Groff is their new 225,000 gallon manure holding pit. It will provide storage for 200 days waste from 70 cows.

developed around the tanks within two weeks time.

"We emptied the tank, removed the algae, and put a piece of copper tubing about two feet long in the bottom of the tank.

"That cleaned it up fine," Allen says.

Because they have just completed the renovation work the area around the watering troughs is still muddy. But they intend to seed the area this spring.

The upper trough, to the south of the lane, is the lighter producer. It will be used for dry cows.

The lower trough, on the other side of the lane, will serve the milking herd.

All of the cows, and the Groffs as well, will be served by the manure handling pit behind the barn.

The holding area is designed to handle all waste

from the 70 cow herd for about 200 days.

Its overall dimensions at the base are 50 by 60 feet. It is eight feet deep at the center.

There is allowance for an extra foot of freeboard in case the pit should become full just before a major storm, or some other problem would prevent timely emptying of the contents.

Behind the barn where the pit is located formerly was just a steep slope, always wet, which ran down and away from the buildings.

Groffs built a high retaining wall at the downhill side of the pit and ran interceptor lines above the holding area to drain off the groundwater.

SCS's Eberly was surprised when they did tests to

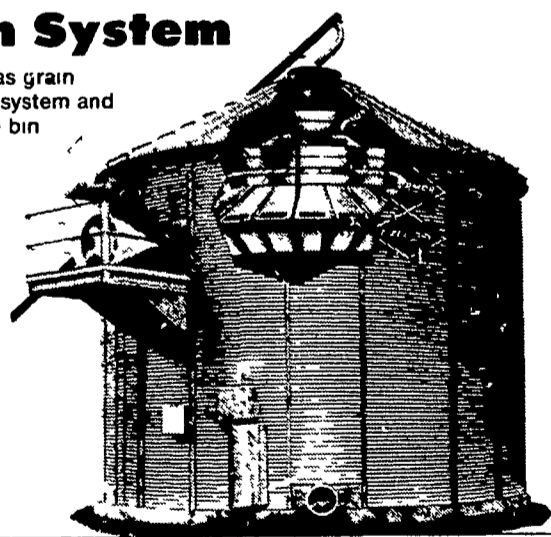
(Turn to Page 17)

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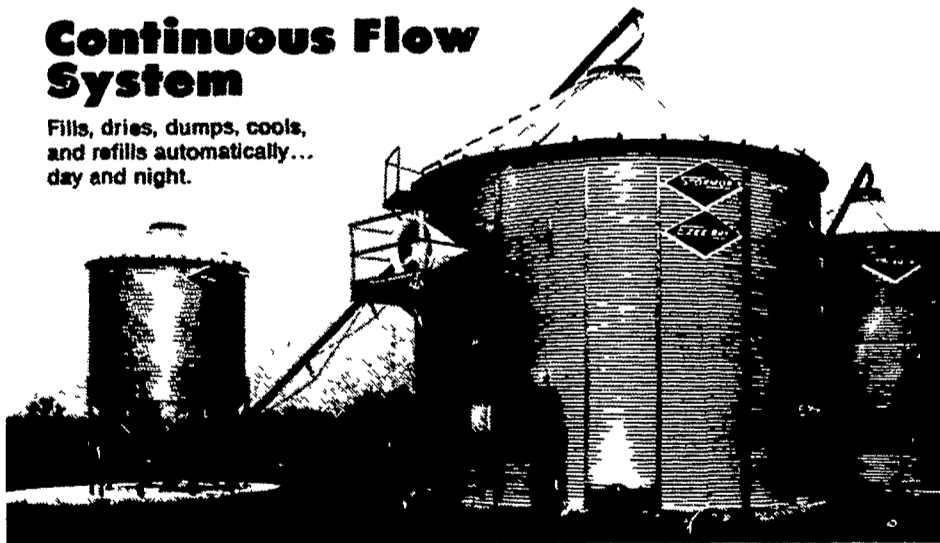
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