

Bags give starting dairyman economical storage option

BY DICK ANGLESTEIN
KISSEL HILL — Twenty-six-year-old Lester Landis, Jr., R3 Lititz, thinks he may have found an economical option to help him get started in dairy farming.

With continually rising costs involved in building a new stanchion barn and the purchase of milking stock, Landis will be utilizing the new Ag-Bag concept for the storage of most of his haylage and silage.

Already, he has about 160 tons of first-cutting alfalfa haylage in one of the long plastic bags lying in a section of pasture on the farm located along Kissel Hill Road behind the Lancaster Airport.

This fall, he'll be filling about three more bags with corn silage. Each bag can hold between 175 and 220 tons.

A custom harvester with a self-propelled chopper, Landis hopes to be in the dairy business by November.

Construction will begin shortly on a 38 by 140-foot one-story cement block stanchion barn with pipeline



Lester Landis Jr., R3 Lititz, stands by large Ag-Bag containing about 160 tons of haylage for his first cutting of alfalfa.

milking system.

The stanchion barn will be equipped with 56 stalls. Landis hopes to begin with a herd of about 50 Holsteins.

The youthful farmer opted for the Ag-Bag storage system rather than make a substantial investment in upright silos.

"I figured that adequate

silos capacity would have cost

about \$30,000 more," he said. "With the cost of renting the equipment for filling and the bags, it will run me about one-tenth that amount for my first year."

Landis has a 16 by 40-foot conventional silo on the farm, along with a smaller 10 by 40-foot facility. Second and third cutting alfalfa will be put in the larger silo.

"This will give me a chance to make some comparisons concerning the feed stored in the silo versus that in the bag," he said.

The first-cutting alfalfa in the first bag was tested at about 18 percent protein.

Landis has done quite a bit of custom harvesting with his self-propelled machine. In the past few years, he's

averaged about 400 hours a season on it.

"Going into dairy farming, I'll be cutting down quite a bit on the custom work," he said.

"Primarily, I'll continue cutting on those farms on which I can see the silos from here."

Landis rents the farm from his father, who operated it since the 1950's. He and his wife, Judy, now live on it with their two-year-old daughter, Julie.

The farm includes about 70 acres and Landis rents another 30. He raises primarily alfalfa and corn with a little barley and wheat. He also has a few brood beef cows which were a fill-in before planning to go into the dairy business.

"The Ag-Bag storage has given me some extra operational flexibility, particularly in just getting started," he said.

"I'll be using a tractor loader to remove the haylage or silage and then feed with a used mixer-wagon."

The Ag-Bag storage concept features the sausage-shaped plastic bags, which measure nine feet in diameter and 135 feet long.

They are described as a management tool in which feed can be tested coming out of the bag and consistent crop from specific fields can be kept in individual bags.

The bags can be filled partially or entirely to keep crop harvests separate. Rations can be mixed from several bags containing haylage, silage, high moisture corn or grain.

Schuylkill dairy art winners chosen

SCHUYLKILL HAVEN — Many area youngsters ages 5-12 competed in the annual dairy art contest last Saturday at Fairlane Village Mall. Milk's The One was the theme for this contest which is held each year in conjunction with the Schuylkill County dairy promotion day.

The winners in the age category kindergarten to grade 3 were: best use of theme - Chris Ferrence, Summit Station; and Christine Roberts, Schuylkill Haven; and best over-all design - Karin Heffner, Pine Grove.

The winners in the age category grade 4-6 were: best use of theme - Liane Roberts, Schuylkill Haven; and Nelson Moyer, Schuylkill Haven; and best over-all design - Loretta Mestishen, Pottsville.

Winners will receive a Milk's The One T-shirt. Each child received a Milk's The One button for participating.

Annie Heffner and Judi Keefer, co-chairmen of the art contest, reported that participation was good, and they hope for more next year. Doris Brown served as judge for the contest.

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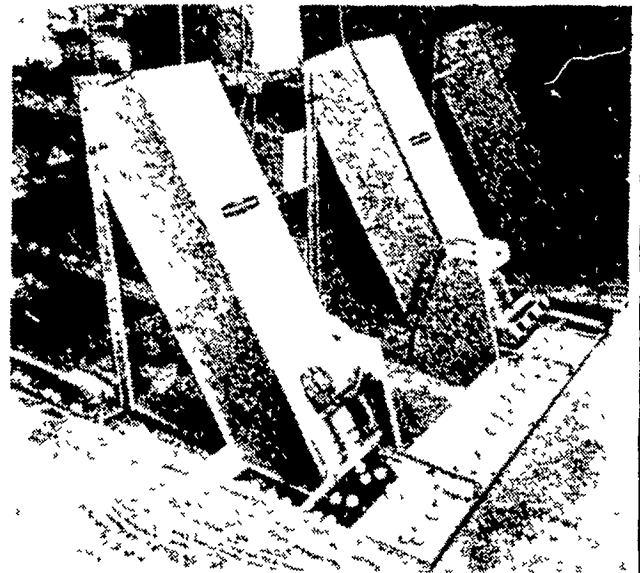
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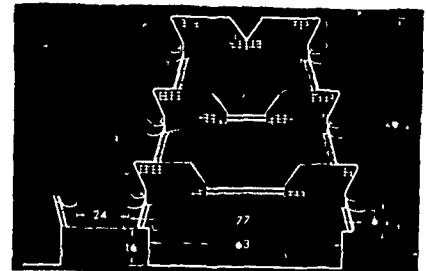
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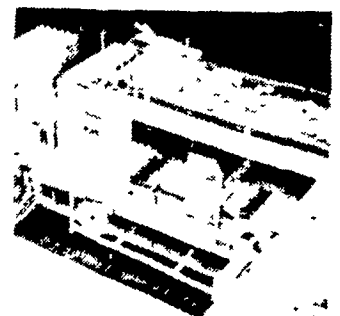
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