

# VPI young stock barn pleases Lebanon dairyman

BY SHEILA MILLER

NEWMANSTOWN — Ever since Extension Agent Newton Bair advised John Oberholtzer that his old limestone barn (built before the American Revolutionary War) should come down, the Lebanon County dairy farmer has been planning his new heifer barn. And, this April, his ideas materialized in the form of a modern Virginia Polytechnic Institute design.

Oberholtzer confesses his idea for the barn was not an original, for he had seen one built last fall on a farm near Kleinfeltersville.

"The beauty part of this barn is the ventilation and the fact that not a lot of bedding has to be used," says Oberholtzer in describing his latest building addition. "I'm really pleased."

The open-fronted building is designed to allow the sun to shine into the heifer pens — the painted tin roof is pitched toward the back. The back wall, constructed out of regular saw lumber, features ventilation panels that can be opened or closed using a manual winch.

The floor of each pen is sloped from back to front to allow urine and any water to drain to a central alley between the barn and feed bunk. And, each pen is equipped with a heated, automatic waterer.

A roof covering the feed bunk is also pitched, and allows any rain water to run off on the outside of the building area, keeping excess water out of the alley way where manure collects. The alley is also on grade so that the manure can drain to a pit located at the end of the building.

One of the features of the feed bunk that Oberholtzer says he is well pleased with is the convertible head gates that double as feed trough bars. He has two sizes —

one for small calves on the upper end and ones for bigger heifers and cows at the other end of the trough. Oberholtzer claims he can't beat the way he can "take a calf fast" now to tag, dehorn, and vaccinate, where before handling even a small calf was quite a job.

Oberholtzer recalls how the barn was built by a four-man carpenter crew in a matter of 10 days.

"It went up fast," he says, pointing out the carpenter, J Elvin Horst, of Newmanstown took pride in his work.

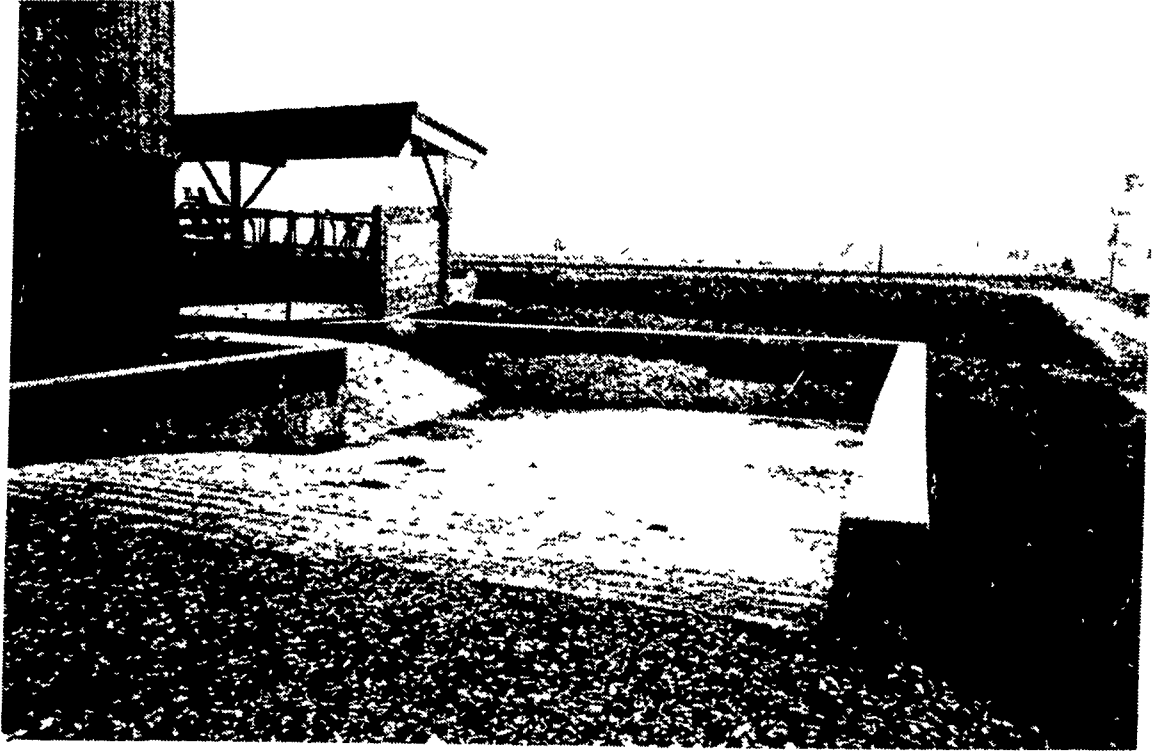
Reviewing the building expenses Oberholtzer says the cost for concrete, cement block, sand, and mortar came to about \$2,200, with both the treated and saw lumber costing just over \$3,300. Roofing, siding, trim and hardware for the bunk and barn came to about \$1,700 with labor amounting to just over \$2,300.

Oberholtzer says the new barn will hold as many head as his old bank barn, with 7 or 8 heifers per pen. The particular barn design he followed called for six pens.

"You don't want to crowd the animals," Oberholtzer points out, "or you're defeating what you're after in the first place. When you put too many in a pen, they'll be stunted and you could wind up with pneumonia."

According to Oberholtzer, there's nothing better to raise healthy calves than fresh air and sunshine.

"When I first saw the building", he recalls, "I thought it looked sloppy, but all the cattle looked good and healthy. Then, I wouldn't have given a nickel for the barn, but I kept watching the calves grow without any trouble. So, I decided to build one. It's the most economical and healthiest building you can put up for the cost."



Scrapings are pushed off the center aisle into this 14' x 16' manure pit. A grooved concrete ramp leads down onto the poured concrete floor. The sidewalls are concrete

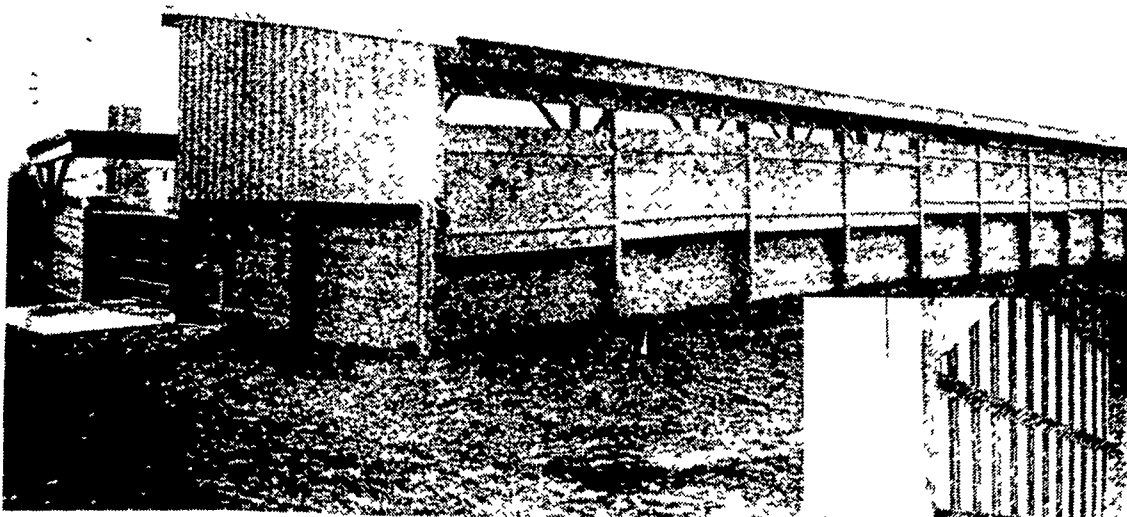
blocks — four high. John Oberholtzer, Newmanstown, who designed the pit himself, says it is not to be used for long-term storage — manure will be hauled right away.



The end pens are equipped with hardware that converts into head gates which makes tagging, dehorning, vaccinating, and breeding

the heifers an easier task. Oberholtzer stresses the trough width be made to allow the small calves reach the feed.

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A hand-winch lowers four wooden panels at the backside of the stalls to allow good ventilation. Says Oberholtzer, he opens them according to the weather — if it's cold and damp, the panels are closed to prevent any drafts over the heifers.

Each of the six pens has a sloping floor which allows urine and water to drain to the central aisle. Oberholtzer points out the stalls should be bedded with peanut shells, sawdust, or finestraw. Baled straw, he emphasizes won't work down.

