

# European machine holds promise for dairy farmers

NEWARK, Del. — Few Americans have ever seen a "Ladewagen," but this European farm implement could be a key to prevention of a growing problem on American dairy farms—displaced stomach.

According to Dr. George Haenlein, Delaware's extension dairy specialist, "Ladewagen" means "loading wagon." Those who have the opportunity to accompany Haenlein on the Extension Dairy Tour of Europe this August will see what it can do.

Basically, the Ladewagen scoops up cut grass or grass hay from a field, compacts it without chopping, and drops it out the back into a blower which directs it into a barn or silo for storage. It's a simple, one-person green chop, haylage or grass hay making operation. But as of now, the machine apparently is not available in this country.

What does grass hay have to do with displaced stomach in dairy cows? Plenty, according to the specialist. Fertilized grass can provide plenty of hay with the nutrients cows need to avoid this problem.

In recent years many dairy farmers have been moving away from hay and towards corn silage for reasons of economics. The good news is that herd production averages have climbed from 13,000 or 14,000 pounds to 17,000 or 18,000 pounds in less than 20 years. Now for the bad news: It's not uncommon for high silage feeding operations to suffer several cows per month with displaced stomach.

We've been supporting today's high production averages with high energy, high protein diets, Haenlein explains. Corn silage and commercial supplements give cows the necessary protein and energy but often in sufficient dietary fiber. Without enough

fiber, the fat level in the milk drops below acceptable levels.

This is more than a cosmetic problem; it's a symptom that can indicate that displaced stomach problems will be next, which can be fatal if not corrected surgically.

Without adequate fiber in the diet, a cow's stomach walls can become black and foul which also can lead to death.

Fiber in the diet comes from farm-grown feeds, either hay or haylage, for example. Some farmers are buying hay, which is fine although it is often expensive. Others are making alfalfa hay, which has certain drawbacks besides the obvious advantages.

Alfalfa leaves can shatter a great deal when made into hay resulting valuable in valuable protein losses. Also, during the first cutting the risk of rain is great. Delaware may experience rain damage during hay making two out of three years. Because of these two factors, farmers may lose half the value of the hay crop in terms of nutrient yields per acre.

As any old-timer can tell you, hay-making is labor intensive. (Even today the system is not too well automated, according to Haenlein.) Big round bales are a new development but are often wasteful unless the bales are stored indoors. One-third of the nutrients can be lost when the big bales are left to sit outside in sun, rain and snow.

Haenlein believes there are two solutions. For farmers who like to feed alfalfa, haylage is a good alternative.

Those who prefer hay should perhaps rediscover grass hay. Grass hay has some real advantages—or it will when the Ladewagen becomes available here.

To make alfalfa haylage, the

farmer should put wilted alfalfa into a sealed structure or horizontal bag. A permanent sealed structure can be expensive, but a bag can be filled with a rented machine at a moderate cost.

No protein is wasted because there is no leaf shattering. Rain at cutting time causes no damage since the crop does not have to dry. And haylage can be made by one person using silage-cutting equipment which is usually available.

A problem with alfalfa haylage is deciding length of cut. When it's long cut, alfalfa has a higher fiber

value, but it's harder to blow into the storage structure. Should you sacrifice nutritional value or ease of handling?

You needn't sacrifice either one if you turn back to that old standby, grass hay. Long, thin blades of grass don't shatter the way alfalfa leaves do. University of Delaware studies by Haenlein have shown that grass can have a high protein content if it's fertilized. Grass is a good crop for using animal wastes, particularly for farmers with liquid manure handling systems.

Cutting time is less critical than with alfalfa. Grass could be cut

several times a year, in fact, whenever it is needed. If it rains, the farmer can simply wait a few days without much loss of quality.

The only drawback to grass hay making, as Haenlein sees it, is the labor requirement. But the Europeans have taken care of that nicely with the Ladewagen.

As soon as some resourceful person brings that concept to the United States, this country may see some return to green hay which can result in an improvement in dairy herd health and economics of dairy cattle feeding.

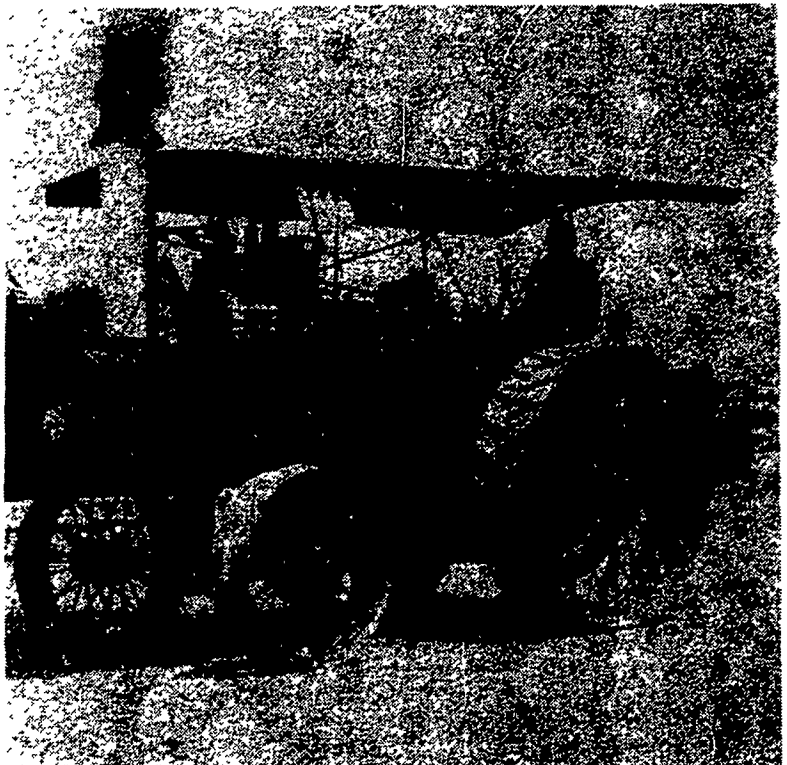
## Delaware elects Soybean directors

DOVER, Del. — Delaware Soybean producers have selected three new representatives for the Delaware Soybean Board.

Secretary of Agriculture, Donald J. Lynch, announced that Nicholas J. Uniatowski, Townsend; Clifton A. Murray, Selbyville and Richard E. West, Frankford were elected to three-year terms on the Board. Secretary Lynch noted this year's balloting showed increasing producers' participation with nearly 200 soybean producers voting from the two counties.

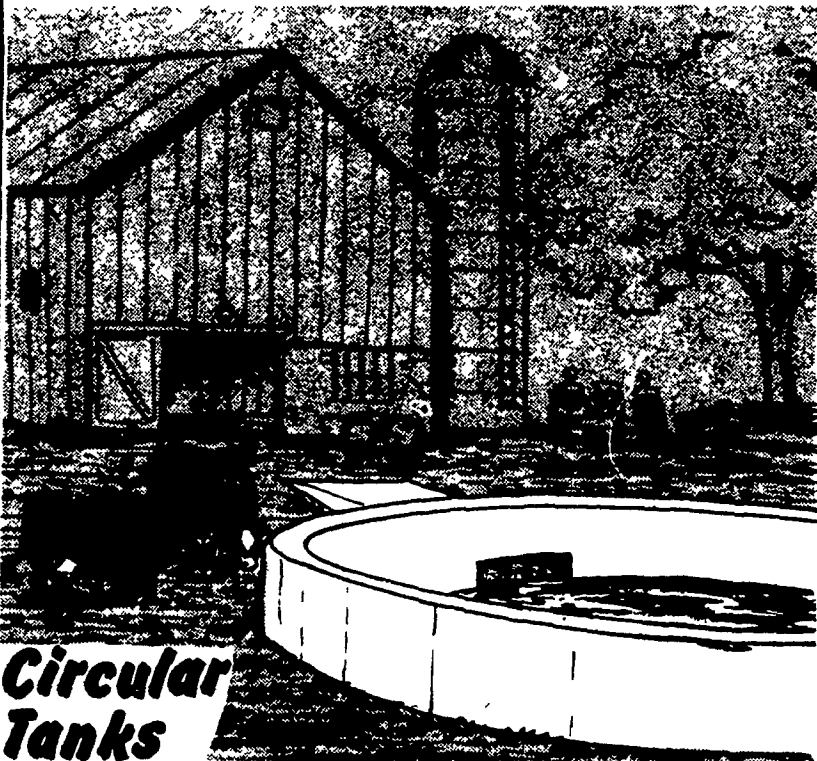
This year the Delaware Soybean Board funded eleven soybean research projects being done by the University of Delaware and one overseas marketing project through the American Soybean Association. The Delaware Cooperative Extension Service, the Delaware Department of Agriculture and the University's Experimental Station are cooperating in the research projects.

## Stewartstown steam show



The Early American Steam Engine Association of Stewartstown, Rt. 74, York County, will hold its annual show of steam engines, tractors and gas engines Thursday through Sunday. There will be rides for children, homemade apple butter and plenty of good food. Nightly entertainment is also planned.

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