

## Buzzing saws, 'baa'ing sheep, bunches of grapes, burned trash, and best management highlight York tour

BY JOYCE BUPP  
Staff Correspondent

DALLASTOWN — A look at modern erosion and runoff controls, plus a peek into a few unusual ag-related enterprises, combined into an interesting October conservation tour for two busloads of York Countians. Sponsors of the annual tour were York's ASCS office, the Extension service, Soil Conservation Service, the county's conservation district, and the Bureau of Forestry.

Charles and Shirley Hess' dairy enterprise at R1 Dallastown was the first stop. In the family since 1872, the farm's home acres encompass some of York County's steepest hills used for cropland, plus another 200 acres of rolling rented land.

Hess told the 70 tour participants that he could remember ditches deep enough to bury a horse inside that cut through the sharply sloping hills when he was a small boy.

Although conservation measures had been in use on the farm for several decades, the 1972 Hurricane Angus deluge convinced the Hess's that more should be done.

Two major diversions were laid out on the 55-acre contoured area rising behind the stately farmhouse. These grassy areas catch runoff, diverting it along a one-percent grade, or a drop of one foot per every hundred feet of ditch. Runoff thus has a chance to filter down through the grassy diversion areas, rather than tearing deep gashes through the topsoil of the hillside. Hay made from the grassed diversions is a bonus.

Two thousand pine seedlings, now maturing into a towering stand, catch and hold additional runoff on the steepest grade just above the farm buildings.

In addition to the water that cascaded down on them from the hillside, the Hess family also had to be concerned with runoff from their dairy building complex. Just several hundred yards downstream from the 100-head free-stall, milking parlor barn lies the backup of Lake Redman, part of the York City water reservoir system.

Hess says his Slurrystore manure holding unit, and excellent relations with the water company, have prevented any problems to date on runoff from the cow lot.

A retired plowing champion for the state and director of the Conservation District, Hess reminded the farmers on the tour that any time soil is tilled, erosion must be taken into consideration and appropriate measures planned.

Praising SCS's efforts to improve erosion problems on the hills surrounding their valley locations, Hess said he felt sure there is more topsoil on his fields today than years before.

A pasture full of fat, woolly, and somewhat wary, ewes, with a few of the first fall lambs, captivated visitors at the next stop.

George and Sue Dutrey bought their Honey Valley Farm at R2 Dallastown, about four years ago. The flock of ewes they began acquiring has now grown to 155, mostly registered Dorsets, but about a quarter of the animals are commercial-bred and Dorset-crossed.

About 40 of the ewes have now been crossed with a prize Rambouillet ram, and this group of yearlings began lambing in early October. A major goal of the Dutrey's is to build a flock that will successfully lamb twice yearly.

They're also aiming to increase the poundage of wool raised per animal, with production hopes for

fatter fleeces pinned to that Rambouillet ram whose own sire once sheared 38 pounds of wool.

Dutrey figures it would take 200 ewes, reproducing at a 200 percent lambing rate, to return a full-time living.

One ewe in the flock seems bent on doing her part to live up to those expectations. She delivered five lambs within a year, raising twins one spring, breeding, back promptly with a single fall lamb, and then repeating the twin delivery again the following spring.

Honey Valley's flock remains outside year round, except for a brief period at lambing time when the ewes are penned in the barn for delivery and assistance if necessary. At lambing, ewes are wormed, sprayed for parasite control, and, in spring, sheared before being turned back out to pasture.

Most of the pasture is seeded to orchardgrass, and flock rations are supplemented with alfalfa hay made from part of the 20 acres owned and 15 rented. Nursing ewes get a regular portion of grain added at feeding time.

Predator control, says Dutrey, has not been a great problem. Stray dogs pose the most regular threat, and they stay clear of the high-tensile fence being installed.

"Five strands of high-tensile can be put up for about a fourth the cost of other fencing," says Dutrey, "and electric in it does a better job of keeping dogs out."

In addition to their farm responsibilities, both George and Sue hold off farm jobs, are raising three daughters and have been instrumental in forming the York Sheep and Wool Producers Association.

High on a windy hill, overlooking scenic Dunkard Valley in the southcentral part of the county, the tour paused for a preview look at the majestic contoured and wooded valley that surrounds the home of the Jack and Nancy Myers.

Dunkard Valley farm is another of the county's historic century farms passed to succeeding generations of tillers of the rich soil. Concerned over the loss of some of that family-rooted soil, Myers recently completed several conservation measures to protect

(Turn to Page D29)



Wooded hills and contour strips frame a classic York County farming valley, shown to conservation tour participants. Centered in the picturesque Dunkard Valley is the farm of 1981 York Conservation cooperators the Jack Myers family.



Some 5 million board feet of lumber, from the hardwood stands of York and Baltimore counties go through the large moving and sawing equipment at the Dubel sawmill.



Shepherd on horseback, Sue Dutrey keeps an eye on the flock of Dorset ewes from the saddle of the family's quarter horse, Charger.

"It's a lot easier than chasing them on foot," she admits. Sue and George Dutrey have over 100 head of purebred and commercial sheep.