



# Farm Talk

by  
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When you talk with farmers about retirement, you get some really interesting reactions. As a group, farmers seem to be less prepared for that eventual day than almost any other segment of society. After all there is no mandatory age and you're talking about retiring from a business rather than a job.

Many of the farmers I've checked with on this topic have no plans at all when it comes to hanging it up. It's a reality they're aware of, but simply haven't faced. The exception to that seems to be those farmers who have family involved in the business. In those cases there's usually a plan, well thought out or otherwise, that describes how someday when the owner-operator retires, the younger family member takes over.

Part of the great American agricultural dream involves a successful farmer bringing his children and/or their spouses into the business — guiding them along as they develop toward the time when the farmer himself can start taking it a little easier. The father-

son partnership is as traditional on American farms as bales of hay, and I would guess that 9 out of 10 of today's young farmers are either farming with one of more prents, have taken over an operation upon the parents' retirement, or have inherited a farm. After all, in today's high dollar farming there aren't many other ways to get started.

But what about the farmers who don't have sons or sons-in-law or whose offspring don't want to farm? What are they doing about retirement? In general, I would say not much. I recall a conversation with two brothers, both very successful, large-scale operators, who farm in partnership with no obvious replacements when it comes their time to retire. When asked, both agreed that they had no plans for retirement. In fact, they don't even intend to retire.

I suppose to die with one's overalls on in the midst of corn planting would be a glorious way to go, but it's not very realistic.

Over the past 50 years when today's older farmers were

entire operation to the next generation. Some farmers retire by taking an off-farm job that gives them income and keeps them busy while continuing to live on the farm. Whatever the mode of retirement, there needs to be a clear-cut conscious decision where the farmer turns over certain tasks and makes certain commitments. Otherwise, he really isn't retiring. And that isn't fair to himself or to his replacement.

But it's a different financial game these days and a farmer can't simply work until he's too old and then turn everything over to someone else without paying a heavy financial price. A sensible solution to retirement and to the eventual turning over of a commercial farm requires a lot of time and consideration. And it's certainly not something that can be left until the main man is in his seventies or eighties to decide for himself he's no longer able to make it to the tractor seat.

Those farmers who have been at least moderately successful and who have someone else to take their place should be giving more thought to retirement. It's good for them and it's good for the next generation. And it's certainly not a death sentence. There are so many things farmers can do in retirement if they'll give it some thought and get unhitched from the idea that the farm won't work without them.

Retiring from farming may be as simple as turning over the physical work to someone else while retaining management control. Or it may be as extreme as moving away and leaving the

entire operation to the next generation.

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## Calibration workshop set

NEWARK, Del. — Corn planting time is fast approaching. How good a job of seeding will you do this year? "Decisions made at planting time may well affect the results at harvest," says University of Delaware extension agricultural engineer Tom Williams. Some crops have the ability to compensate for poor planting practices, but most do best when they are seeded uniformly.

Planting was one of the first operations to be mechanized. The first corn planter, patented in 1839, allowed farmers to plant without stooping. Today a farmer can plant a 30-foot-wide swath at 5 mph while riding in an air conditioned tractor cab and relying on electronic monitors to tell him everything is working.

Planting can consist of applying dry or liquid fertilizer beside the row, granular insecticide in the seed furrow or beside the row, opening a seed furrow, metering seed at a uniform rate, placing treated seed at a uniform depth with good seed-to-seed contact for fast germination, and covering the seed for protection. Spraying of herbicides can also be ac-

complished at the same time. Having all these materials coming out of the planter at the intended rates under varying conditions can be critical, and depends on proper calibration of all metering mechanisms, Williams says.

A calibration workshop to demonstrate proper calibration techniques will be held at the Delaware State Fairgrounds on Route 13 in Harrington, on Thursday, March 1, beginning at 10 a.m. Corn planters, row fertilizer, granular applicators, grain drills, PTO and ground-driven sprayers will be covered, as well as dry fertilizer applicators and chemigation pumps.

## Md. fair list

ANNAPOLIS, Md. — A complete schedule of all Maryland county and 4-H fairs, community shows, agricultural festivals and youth exhibitions is available from the Maryland Department of Agriculture.

Written requests should be directed to the Maryland Fair and Show Schedule, 50 Harry S Truman Parkway, Annapolis, MD 21401. Telephone requests will be taken at (301) 841-5861.

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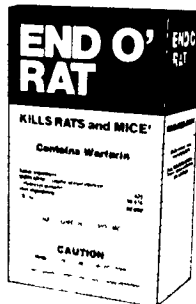
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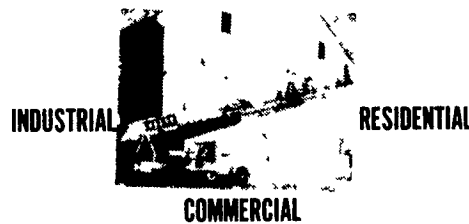


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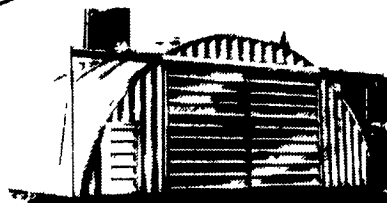
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