



Brockett's Ag Advice

By John E. Brockett
Farm Management Agent
Lewistown Extension Office

Most farmers could reduce costs in relation to returns. Do you believe that? Could you? How? Those are the three logical questions that follow a seemingly wild statement such as the one with which I started. Do I believe it? After over 25 years of working with farm records, my answer is an unqualified yes. When I see some of the ranges in costs among similar farms, I am positive that farmers are often cost inefficient. Can I prove that? For the most part, I can prove it if you would listen.

Let me just take one factor - the percentage of cash income it takes to pay operating expenses not including interest. Here I am comparing a farmer's operating expenses not including interest. Here I am comparing a farmer's operating costs no matter when he started in business. Interest is removed as a factor for this comparison. Last year the most efficient operators used 45% of their cash income to pay operating expenses. Average was about 60% and some farmers were using over 80% of cash income to pay operating expenses. Those who were the most concerned about reducing operating expenses were those who were already below 50%. Is that why they were already there?

Could you reduce your cost of production? The answer is probably yes. There are circumstances beyond your control. However these should be viewed as a challenge not an excuse. Let's look at some how to's:

Soil Test - then use a balanced fertility program. The most amazing thing to me is that every farmer in Pennsylvania does not use soil testing as a routine tool. Some use the worn out excuse "it is

not very accurate". Others cite a time factor. Others talk about a lot of other reasons. It all adds up to the fact that farmers who do not use soil testing are really not interested in operating a farm. They are just farming for exercise, fun, or habit.

Are you limited on fertilizer dollars? Use your soil tests to make the best use of them. Set priorities on each field. Example: Priority 1 - new seedings, corn or other high return crop; already high in nutrient value; good pH; easy working; Priority 2 - first or second year alfalfa stands, corn after sod; good nutrient value; Priority 3 - good alfalfa - grass stand, corn after corn; fair nutrient value; Etc. Each priority would get balanced treatment such as: Priority 1 - 80 to 100 percent of recommendation including lime; Priority 2 - 70 to 80 percent of recommendation with possible cheating on some P and K for corn if necessary to fulfill lime requirements; Priority 3 - 60 to 70 percent of recommendations for corn with possible further reduction in P and K but not for lime and 60 percent of recommendation for alfalfa.

Are you limited on pesticide dollars? Quick now go back to last year - what were your major pest problems? Could you handle them less expensively with a more timely application. Sweep survey for insects on a regular basis can really reduce insecticide costs in many years. Don't be impetuous though - it does not make sense to spray to control an insect that is already on its way out (thru parasites, natural life cycle, or a minor infestation).

Maintain Equipment - maintenance is always less expensive than repairing. Check oil levels in

motors on a regular basis, lubricate moving parts routinely, check belts and chains, replace worn parts before they break. Two dollars worth of oil last summer would have saved us a \$349 repair bill. How many of you who had a tractor "blow up" or a forage harvester "break down" could have saved that \$2500 to \$4500 repair bill with regular maintenance? Now don't say "not me". Remember I have been there too. You are an hour late because (you put in the reason-they are all good including the alarm clock malfunction). The weatherman is predicting a weather change. You have to get that field planted or hay mowed or haylage chopped. It won't hurt to forget to check the oil this once. Zoom off you go. The day becomes hot, the work load heavier than expected, you're on a hillside, suddenly something in that tractor engine is moving without lubrication.

The rest you know - right? Do you want more? Remember the adage: For lack of a nail the horse was lost, for lack of a horse the king was lost, for lack of a leader a battle was lost, end result was a lost kingdom. Maintenance is a must if you want to cut costs. Most major equipment problems can be traced to two things (1) lack of maintenance and (2) rough handling.

Red clover varieties listed

UNIVERSITY PARK Red clover, an important hay crop in Pennsylvania, is now available in seven high yielding varieties, according to Richard W. Cleveland of Penn State.

In a single harvest year, growers can realize an increased cash value of about \$100 per acre with most of the improved red clover varieties, Cleveland stated recently.

The superior varieties - listed alphabetically - are Arlington, Florex, Florie, Kenstar, Redland II, Redmor, and Tristan. Testing of crop varieties is a key responsibility among scientists with the Agricultural Experiment Station at Penn State.

The top varieties produce about one ton more hay per acres than Pennscott red clover, the old standard variety still grown widely by farmers. Cleveland and colleagues in agronomy at Penn State tested the new varieties over 10 years at locations in Centre and Lancaster counties. There are usually no significant differences in yield among several superior varieties in any given test.

Improved yields of the superior varieties are at last partly due to better disease resistance than Pennscott, Cleveland observed. For example, the variety Arlington

was very resistant to northern anthracnose that sometimes was severe in Centre County trials.

In some trials, red clover yields compared favorably with yields of alfalfa grown at the same locations. Usually shorter lived than alfalfa, red clover is easier to manage and tolerates higher soil acidity than alfalfa.

Occasional severe infestations of northern anthracnose were noted in the Centre County plots. Arlington was highly resistant to the disease, as mentioned earlier, while Pennscott was very susceptible. Anthracnose causes injury to the stems and leaves - often entering the crown and killing the plants.

"Despite some claims, otherwise, we found that red clover varieties seldom live beyond two productive years, counting the year of planting," Cleveland stated. "We tested some varieties repeatedly and found persistence beyond two years to be highly variable."



RED ROSE DELIVERS METAL PRODUCTS & BUILDING SUPPLIES



DISTRIBUTOR
For former Kaiser
weatherstrong roofing
and siding now rolled
by McElroy Metal Mill.

DIAMOND EMBOSSED
And Available In Brown,
Sunset Gold, Meadow
Green, Ranch Red,
White and Buckskin Tan.

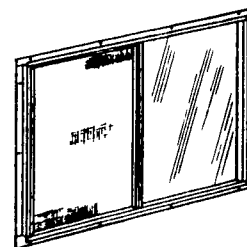
Roofing & Siding	10'	12'	14'	16'
Painted Aluminum	\$17.05	\$24.46	\$23.88	\$27.28
Roofing	13'6"	15'7"	18'9"	21'9"
Diamond Embossed	\$19.80	\$23.03	\$27.72	\$32.13

- Prices Subject To Change Without Notice
- Delivery Available At Extra Charge

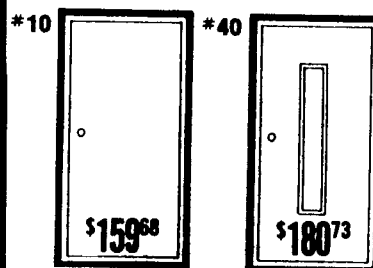
Full Line of Accessories Also Available

Treated Timbers	10'	12'	14'	16'	18'	20'	22'	24'	26'	28'
4x6	\$8.80	\$11.00	\$12.10	\$13.30	\$18.70	\$21.79				
6x6			\$17.60	\$22.00	\$25.30	\$32.97	\$38.41	\$45.60	\$75.34	\$80.00

Dimension Lumber	16'	18'
2x4	\$3.88	\$4.36
2x6	\$5.72	\$6.53



AGCOM WINDOWS
Heavy Alum. Frame, Self Flashed
J-Channel - Ready to Install
46"x27" \$42⁷¹ 46"x40" \$57⁸⁶

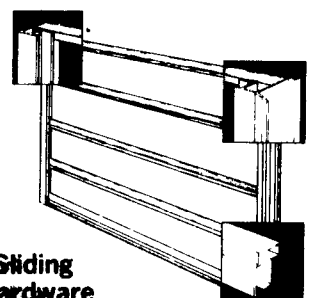


PRE-HUNG SERVICE DOORS

Turn Upside down, Turn Inside Out, All Out Of The Same Box...
ONE DOOR DOES THE WHOLE JOB!

BIGG FRAME AND BIGG FRAME II SLIDING DOORS

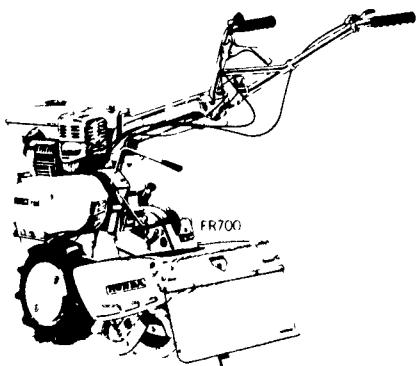
Build Bigger & Stronger Sliding Doors! Plus... Track and Hardware Also Available.



RED ROSE BUILDING SUPPLY CO.
P.O. Box 56, Ephrata, Pa. 17522
Call Collect - 717-738-2401

HONDA ROTOTILLER PRE-SEASON SPECIAL

BUY A HONDA ROTOTILLER AND GET SIX MONTHS FREE FINANCING.
(For Qualified Customers)



REAR TINE MODELS

5 H.P. \$869

7 H.P. \$979

FRONT TINE MODELS

2 H.P. \$299

3.5 H.P. \$499

5 H.P. \$599

Plus! FREE FURROWER KIT WITH A 3 1/2 H.P. HONDA OR LARGER - \$50 - \$70 Value

TRADING WELCOMED
FREE DEMONSTRATIONS OR TRY OUR RENTAL UNITS

* Once You Have A Honda, You Won't Use Anything Else.

OFFER GOOD TILL MARCH 31 717 665-2407

Monday, Thursday, Friday 'til 9:30
Tuesday, Wednesday, Saturday 'til 6:00

Elm, PA

Bomberger's