

# Green Valley Farm grows one step at a time

BY JACK HUBLEY

MANHEIM — A lot has happened around this farm since that day in 1967 when a 14-year-old Manheim farm boy named Dale Nolt bought a handful of brood sows.

Although Dale had been introduced to a wide spectrum of agricultural enterprises by his father, Martin Nolt, it was the hog business that fascinated Martin's son and made him realize where his life's work lay.

With graduation in 1971, came a need to move ahead, and Dale entered a partnership with his father in the ownership of 60 sows.

Two years passed and the young farmer found himself married, and a full partner in the Nolt's entire farming operation including 400 steers, 2,300 laying hens, about 20 ewes, and 200 tillable acres.

Though Dale enjoyed all phases of farming, it was the hog business that became his number-one

priority, and the younger Nolt is quick to credit his father for kindling his fascination with pork. Recognizing his natural affinity for the business, Martin gave his son the reins when decisions had to be made.

"He's had much to do with why I wanted to farm," Dale points out fondly. "He's a progressive farmer, and if there's a better way to get the job done, then he's the first to say, 'let's do it.'"

Growth continued with the construction of a 300-head finishing barn in 1974, and in 1976, the Nolt's expanded their sow herd to 100 animals, building a new barn to house gestating sows and finishing hogs.

Throughout his career, Dale has made it a policy to keep abreast of industry trends through seminars, reading and sharing ideas with other farmers. It was knowledge gained through his visits to Midwestern hog farms that led to a

major expansion in 1977.

Increasing his sow herd to 200 animals, Nolt built a new farrowing barn with 32 farrowing crates, a pre-nursery, nursery, and 200 gestation stalls. The new building featured a raised floor with automatic scrapers removing manure twice a day.

The success of this venture led to still more improvements in 1982. Once again utilizing the raised-floor concept, Nolt built a new 200-head gilt finishing barn. In an effort to increase feeding efficiency he also installed a wet-feeding system with water nipples located directly above the feed.

One problem encountered with Green Valley's growth was the time and labor required in fueling its large number of animals. In an effort to streamline feeding chores, Dale installed an on-farm feed processing system, including a stationary hammermill and pneumatic blowing system that delivers feed to all of his buildings through two-inch lines.

To keep his new processing system well-fed, Nolt installed an irrigation system last year, a move which he hopes will increase his corn yields at least seven out of every 10 years.

It was inevitable that Nolt's dedication and business foresight would lead to recognition. On March 7, of this year, a decade after receiving the FFA American Farmer Degree, Nolt traveled to Kansas City, Missouri, to be named Pa. Pork All-American by the National Pork Producers Council.

Though honored by such laurels, the unassuming Lancaster County farmer derives his greatest satisfaction from watching his management decisions result in a more efficient operation.

"Success is largely governed by management," Nolt observes, "and if something goes wrong around here, all I have to do is look in the mirror to see the reason why."

One important management decision involved the installation of an evaporative cooling system in his farrowing, gestation, and nursery facilities.

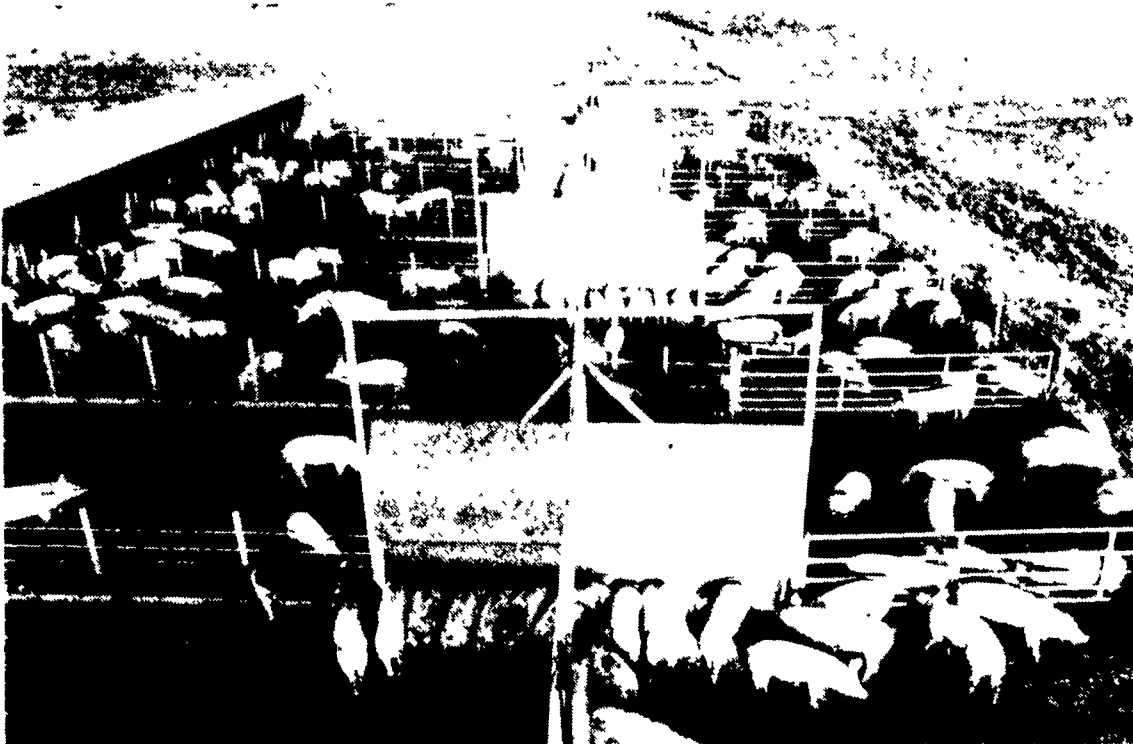
With building temperatures not exceeding 80° to 82° F., even during the hottest months, Dale reports that his sows continue to eat well, and their conception rate is maintained. Green Valley sows currently average 9 to 9.5 pigs per litter.

Producing 4,000 market hogs a year is time-consuming business, (Turn to Page A24)



A litter of newborn pigs dozes comfortably on a raised floor of coated wire.

## Finishing area contains 420 head



This open-front finishing barn contains 420 hogs. Green Valley Farms has facilities to finish 1,000 market hogs.

## Sows are hand-fed



Dale Nolt hand-feeds his sows in the gestation barn. Sows receive their four to five-pound ration twice daily.

## And so are lambs



Come feeding time, sisters Michelle, (left) age eight, and Sharon, five, are on hand to help with the bottle feeding chores. The Nolt's maintain a flock of 20 ewes for the Easter lamb market.

## Martin tends steers



The father-son team of Martin and Dale Nolt divides livestock husbandry duties on the Nolt's Manheim farm, with Martin (pictured) tending the steers, and Dale managing the hog business.