

BY JACK HUBLEY

KUTZTOWN — Things have changed quite a bit around Schick Farms since Herb Schick built his first farrowing house and began selling feeder pigs in 1960.

For one thing, Herb now has two partners; sons Otto, 29, and Paul, 25, to help shoulder the responsibility for caring for the farm's 200-plus sows, and marketing 3,000 hogs a year.

And then, of course, there's the new technology permeating all phases of the livestock industry, and taking pork production by storm.

Last year, with the help of Penn

State agricultural engineer Dan Myer, and swine specialist Matt Parsons, the Schick family committed itself to the swine revolution. At their farm, located 10 miles north of Kutztown in Berks County, the Schicks built two new farrowing rooms and equipped them—along with their new nursery built one year earlier—with a geothermal heating and cooling system.

The two new farrowing rooms, each containing 12 crates, along

with the two 10-pen nursery rooms, have boosted Schick's production considerably. Best of all, the new housing has proven to be the most energy efficient that the family has ever used.

The system owes its efficiency to the earth's warmth stored beneath the surface throughout even the coldest months. Schick Farms takes advantage of this stored energy by drawing air through 10 flexible hoses located six feet underground. On its 130-foot

subterranean journey to the pork factory, the air is warmed 40° or more.

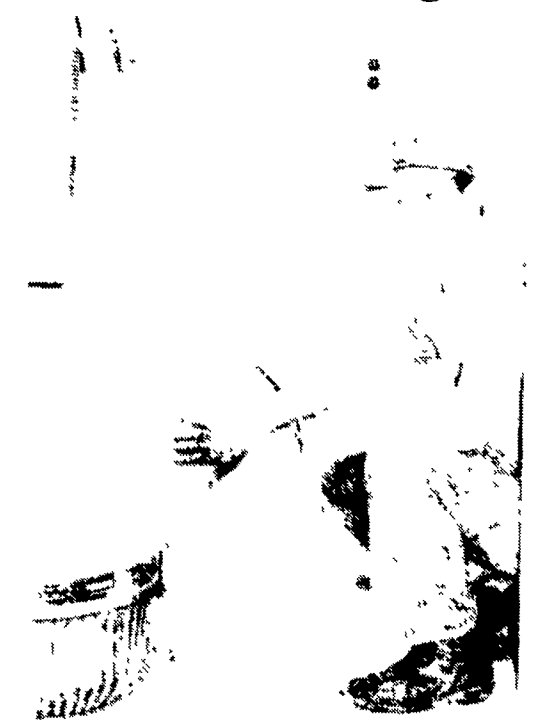
"During the winter, the outside air enters our buildings at about 53°," Herb says. "Even with the temperature holding around zero last winter, that air was in the low 40's by the time it got inside."

During the summer, this piped air has just the opposite effect on interior temperatures. Never losing its cool even during the hottest months, the earth lowers the temperature of incoming air and forces suspended moisture to condense. Sloping the pipes away from the building and having them exit the ground at the foot of an embankment to the rear of the farrowing house, enables the system to rid itself of this condensation. The air entering the buildings, then, is not only cooler, but drier than outside air, as well.

Providing the pulling power for the system are two 10-inch fans, each one responsible for drawing air through five of the tubes surfacing in the building within a centrally located utility room. It is in this room where, during the winter, supplemental heat can be added by means of a gas heater.

The warm air then flows upward and enters adjacent farrowing and nursery areas through vents located at the junction of the walls and ceiling.

Warmed 40 degrees



2. Air is pulled through tubes by a pair of 10-inch fans. Each fan collects air from a set of five tubes surfacing in a compartment behind the wall.

Incoming air



1. Herb Schick (left), along with son Paul, inspects the ten tubes feeding air to farrowing and nursery building in the background.

Farrowing vents



3. Control box on right regulates fan speed. Louvers in door, and trap door in ceiling admit air to regulate pressure in summer and winter, respectively. Air enters farrowing and nursery areas through vents at top of walls.

Cozy quarters

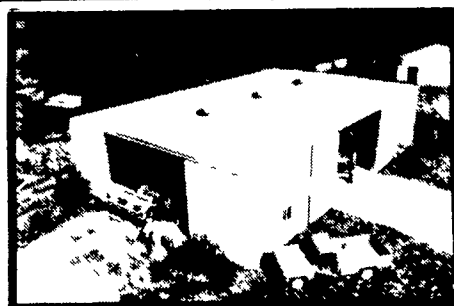


4. Gas heater in room supplements heating. Four-speed fans...

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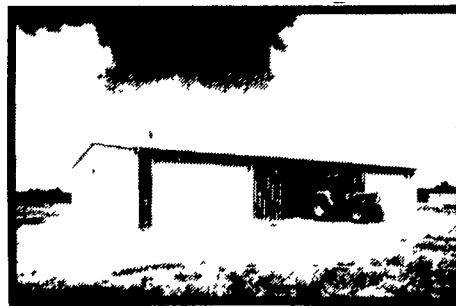
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