

Farmland Preservation — It's worth it



Rock Springs, Pa.

Photo by Dick Anglestein

Answer critical questions before remodeling barn

MORRISTOWN — Many people who have purchased an older farmstead sooner or later must make a hard decision: whether to repair and remodel the barn for some type of use or to tear it down. Evaluating existing buildings and their usefulness can be difficult. Often we are attracted to the charm of an older building and do not see major difficulties in maintaining it in a safe and useful condition according to Montgomery County Agent Joe Way.

Before putting money into remodeling an existing barn, ask yourself some critical questions. Is the barn location desirable? No amount of repair and refurbishment can make up for a barn that is in the wrong place. A critical evaluation of the barn's location in relation to a long-term plan for the farmstead should be made. If the barn is in the wrong place, don't compound this problem by investing more money in fixing it up.

What is the barn's structural condition? Is it sound or are there major defects that will require repair? Items to investigate for structural soundness include roof lines and roof, walls and their construction, main sills and foundation walls, and floor joists and beams.

In older Pennsylvania barns, be sure to critically evaluate the first

floor walls for frost heaving or deterioration, especially the corner sections. Also investigate the joints of the various large framing timbers within the barn, as well as the floor logs holding up the barn floor.

If you suspect structural problems, have the barn evaluated by a competent contractor or other

individual. For more hints and ideas on how to evaluate and remodel existing barns for use in small livestock enterprises, you may wish to obtain a copy of NRAES-6 "Small Farms - Livestock Buildings and Equipment." This \$4, 85-page handbook includes information of interest to anyone planning a small livestock

enterprise.

In addition to a section on evaluating and remodeling barns, the handbook includes information on construction and planning of new facilities and requirements for various poultry and livestock that are raised by part-time farmers.

A copy of NRAES-6 "Small Farms - Livestock Buildings and

Equipment" can be ordered by sending a check for \$4 payable to The Pennsylvania State University, 204 Agricultural Engineering Building, University Park, PA 16802. Penn State Extension Service offers programs on a non-discriminatory basis to all persons without regard to race, color, sex, creed, National origin or age.



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