



Farm Talk

by
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While environmentalists press for an end to agricultural chemicals and naturalists talk about food production without chemicals, researchers continue in their effort to find a better way to produce our food supply using chemicals in a safe and sensible way.

If you doubt the continued need for agricultural chemicals, particularly pesticides, consider this: Food producers worldwide battle against 10,000 harmful insects, 1500 damaging diseases, 1800 noxious weeds, and 1000 tiny nematode species. Obviously it will take a lot more than a sharp-eyed bug picker to deal with crop damage potential of that magnitude.

Beyond the usual problems of pesticide handling and application

is the burdensome task of disposal. What does a farmer or commercial applicator do with leftover pesticides and with the residues from pesticide containers?

There was a time when they simply dug holes and buried them, or stored them in large containers and then buried the large containers. But environmentalists are rapidly putting an end to that kind of behavior, and rightly so. They're saying to pesticide users that they must clean up their act, and that includes safe disposal.

So what is a safe way to get ride of pesticide residues? Researchers at the Iowa Agricultural Experiment Station are working with the Environmental Protection Agency, testing a system that

holds great promise. It's simple, can be accomplished on the farm, and seems to be quite safe. A research team of agronomists, engineers, botanists, entomologists, horticulturists and bacteriologist, using funds from the Environmental Protection Agency, has converged on a concrete pit that is yielding a lot of information about pesticide disposal.

The project involves a 12 x 30-foot pit that slopes from 3 to 4-feet deep. It's lined with a layer of gravel, followed by a layer of soil and another layer of gravel. A tile line underneath the pit allows researchers to sample ground water, and a movable roof covers the pit during rain. This setup allows the researchers to see what does happen to pesticides that are disposed of in such a manner.

The researchers were looking for a system that would be leaking proof and overflow proof, that would provide an environment in which chemicals could degrade or decompose into harmless substances. And they wanted something that would allow water evaporation to make room for more waste. During the research effort, more than 40 pesticides have been disposed of in the pit, usually in the form of rinse water from applicator equipment.

Here's the interesting part. Researchers found no chemical buildup in surrounding ground water and no contamination in a well, located only 240 feet from the pit. They discovered that the

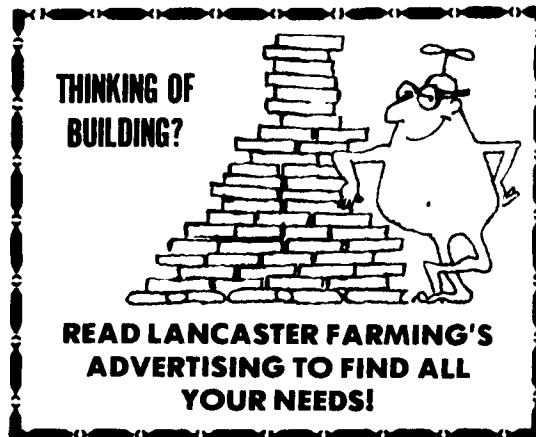
chemicals did break down through chemical and biological processes, and that the atmosphere around the pit contained less than one part per billion of chemical contamination. According to one researcher, that amount of contamination is equal to a speck of dandruff on a hair stretched from the earth to the moon.

At another site, the Iowa researchers looked at a number of small pits made of plastic garbage cans. These also produced encouraging results.

The researchers say that while the soil has an amazing ability to absorb and break down pesticides, man has the ability to produce

chemicals faster than Mother Nature can dispose of them. That means some form of containment, perhaps the concrete pit or maybe even the small plastic garbage cans, are the answer to this "pesty" problem.

Environmental purists will probably find some way to object to this solution to pesticide disposal, but surely they will admit it's better than what goes on now. And until they've carefully analyzed the results of this agricultural research, maybe they should withhold judgment. Perhaps this is an environmentally good way to dispose of pesticides — chemicals that are necessary if we are to continue to feed ourselves.



Reserve corn is released

Washington, D.C. — Corn placed in the farmer-owned reserve from Oct. 6, 1981 through June 30, 1982 (reserve IV) has been released for redemption, effective immediately, by Everett Rank, executive vice president of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Commodity Credit Corporation.

Rank said this means farmers now may sell — but are not required to sell — their reserve IV corn after repaying their CCC price support loan.

The reason for the action, he said, was that the national average price received by farmers for corn had reached \$3.16 per bushel, 1 cent above the \$3.15 per bushel release level for reserve IV corn.

USDA makes storage payments to farmers with grain in the reserve. Upon repayment of the loan, farmers can keep the storage payments earned through the date of repayment.

Release of reserve IV corn will continue through Sept. 30, Rank said. If the five-day national average market price remains at or above \$3.15 on Sept. 30, storage earnings will stop and interest on the price support loan will begin to accrue.

If the Sept. 30 price falls below \$3.15, reserve IV corn no longer will be in release status and farmers will continue earning storage payments.



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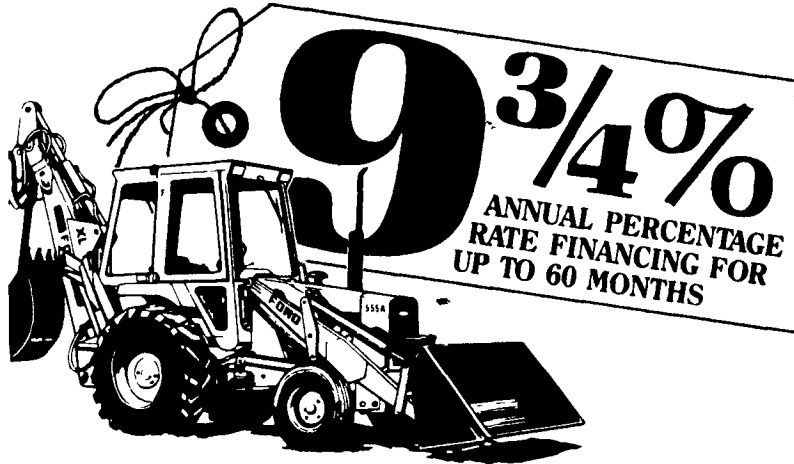
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