

Metal roof care can prevent problems

NEWARK, Del. — It's all too easy to wait until a section of metal roofing on a farm building ends up in a pasture after a storm to wonder what condition the roof's in. University of Delaware extension agricultural engineer Jim Scarborough advises farmers not to wait that long. A little preventive maintenance now can add years to the life of the roof and the structure it covers, he says.

Start off by going in the building on a sunny day and looking for light coming through holes in the roof. "These holes may seem unimportant — especially if the building is just a livestock shelter. But water can come through them and run down the inside of the roof to a purlin or truss member, causing rot," Scarborough says. note the approximate position of holes, or better yet, if possible mark them by inserting a large nail through each one.

Next, examine the purlins (the horizontal 2 x 4s above the truss) for signs of rot. This usually appears as a dark brown or black stain on the wood and is due to water leaking in from unsealed

nail holes. Such damage is especially insidious since it starts on the upper side of the purlin where it can't be seen. "If no rot is visible but you're still not sure, take an awl and poke around the purlin where the roofing is attached," he advises. "Rotted wood is soft and very easy to penetrate."

Now, step outside and take a close look at the roof from ground level. See the nails sticking up in the air? These have been loosened by the expansion and contraction of the roofing. Once a nail has worked loose, the lead or neoprene washer underneath can no longer keep water from flowing down onto the purlins every time it rains.

If the roof is galvanized steel, Scarborough says to check it for dark brown patches — rust spots which indicate the galvanizing has worn off and it's time to paint.

So much for the inspection; now for the maintenance.

If there were many rotted purlins, he advises replacing the entire roof, rather than trying to do a patch job. "It's no use renailling the roofing onto rotted purlins unless you like picking up pieces of

sheet metal from your fields after thunderstorms," he says. Fortunately, rotted purlins don't usually mean rotted trusses, so those should still be good. But check to be sure!

If the purlins have rotted in only a few places, fit a new 2 x 4 next to each bad section by shoving it between the truss upper chord and the roofing. Note the position, since the metal above will have to be renailled to the new purlin section.

Now, climb onto the roof for the rest of the repairs. Walk carefully, stepping only where there are nails so as not to dent the roofing — especially if it's aluminum. Start with the nails that have worked loose. Pull them out if possible and replace them with new longer ring shanked roofing nails with neoprene washers.

"If you can't remove a nail without damaging the roofing, cut it off and drive the stub into the purlin," the engineer says. "Then drive a new nail right next to the old one so the washer will cover the hole in the roofing. Use plastic caulk around the nail if necessary. If the nail has only worked up a

short distance, a half-inch or less, drive it back into the purlin if the washer is still good. It may work loose again later, but you'll catch it on your next yearly inspection."

Once the roof has been renailled, look for those small random holes that were visible from inside. Seal these by inserting a sheet metal screw into each hole. If any of the laps on the roofing sheets have bent upward, use sheet metal screws to secure them in position again. If the screws aren't sufficient, use plastic caulk along the lap to stop any leakage.

If there are dark patches on a galvanized roof, wire brush any badly rusted areas and prime them with red or blue lead paint or zinc chromate. For the finish coat, a metallic zinc paint gives the best service, Scarborough says. Two coats will renew the zinc coating carried by ordinary galvanized sheets. A single coat should last from six to eight years; two coats should last 12 years.

According to the specialist, each gallon of paint will cover from 600 to 800 square feet of roofing and can be applied with a brush or sprayed on. Spraying will cut the application time by about 50 percent, but will use about 25 percent more paint than brushing. If the barn is for livestock shelter, it may be desirable to make the roof more reflective by covering the metallic zinc paint with a good quality exterior white house paint.

When working on a roof, always be safety conscious. "Remember, that first step down is a long one," says Scarborough. "Don't work on a roof when it's damp from recent rain, or early in the morning when there may be dew on it. Wear rubber or plastic soled boots rather than leather soled ones. And finally, don't get on the roof right after tramping through the cow yard unless you wash the manure off the soles of your boots first — manure makes for slippery footing on roofs."

Pomona Grange to meet

OAKRYN — Lancaster County Pomona Grange No. 71 will confer the Fifth Degree today at 8 p.m. at Fulton Grange Hall, Oakryn.

They will hold their fall meeting at Commonwealth National Bank, 12 S. Market St., Elizabethtown, as guests of Elizabethtown Area Grange No. 2076 Saturday, Oct. 13, at 8 p.m. The Master, Clifford W. Holloway Jr., will preside at the business session. Serving on the

resolution committee will be Robert T. Coates, Emma Rhoades, Joseph G. Hess and Kenneth Myer.

Dorothy Berry, Lecturer, will present the program. Richard Hann, Agribusiness Director of The Milton Hershey School in Hershey, will show slides and tell about his trip on the 1983 Friendship Tour to Russia where he visited several farms.

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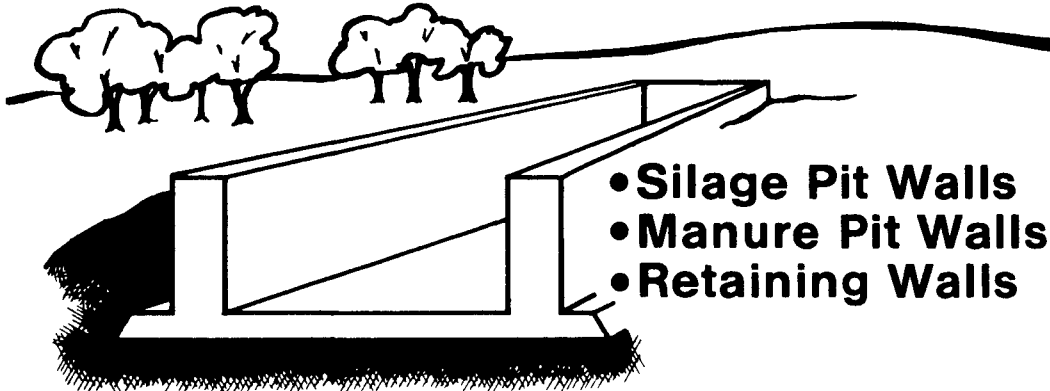
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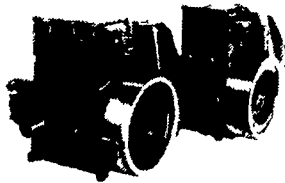
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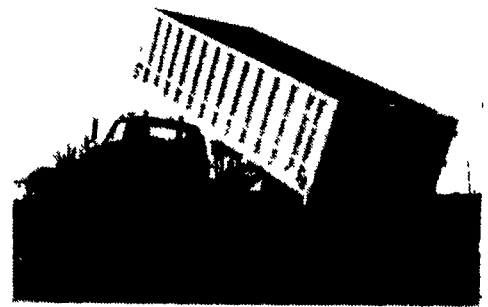


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