

Brockett's Ag Advice

By John E. Brockett
Farm Management Agent
Lewistown Extension Office

Dealing With the Spring Rush

Down on the farm, spring is the busiest time of the year. There is never enough time to get everything done. At times, farmers find it hard to even enjoy the newness of spring with flowers blooming, green grass becoming greener, and the fresh smell of newly worked ground. For most farm families, this is the season of planting and harvest time combined. This year most crops were planted on time due to an unseasonably dry early spring. Then came the worry that the seed would never sprout or if it did the small plant would dry up and die,

because we needed rain. Now much of Pennsylvania has received that welcome rain and crops are on "GO."

All worries are past — but wait a minute, there is a rapidly maturing hay crop out there. It needs to be harvested now. Now we need a few warm sunny days such as we had a few weeks ago. That is one of the risks in farming in Pennsylvania, weather is always a factor.

Some farmers seem to be able to work with the weather. Other farmers seem to fight the weather all of the time. Still others resign

themselves to the fact that whatever they do will be at odds with the prevailing weather. You know hay is mowed so it rains for five straight days or the weather report says rain for three days, so hay is not mowed and it does not rain until the sixth day. And what happened on the sixth day? That is right, hay was mowed. Those who seem to have the best "luck" with the weather are the ones who plant and harvest when it is time regardless of the weather. They take a chance and occasionally lose, but they also win some.

Beating the Weather

People can never really beat the weather. However, a good manager may be able to plan things so he wins a few battles. One way to do this is to plan on putting the first cutting in the silo. That cuts out one or two days of drying time. It also may help get the hay stand off to a good start for the second and third crop, since the sooner the first cutting is taken off, the sooner the next crop will start to grow.

A second way to be a winner is to

monitor weather reports and cut hay crops whenever it appears that the weather patterns call for two or more days of sunny weather. A rain on newly mowed hay will not hurt much.

A third way is to use a preservative program with your hay, thus having less exposure time for rain damage. In the past two years grass has matured sooner than alfalfa. Thus, farmers should probably be harvesting first cutting hay crops based on grass maturity rather than alfalfa maturity.

Of course anyone who is interested in winning has all equipment on "instant ready." It is ready to go now if conditions are right. All moving parts should be well lubricated. All of these items that needed replacement from last year should have been replaced. The proper head should be on the chopper. Wagons should be cleaned out and equipped with new or repaired or usable tires. It does not hurt to give it a tryout ahead of time. Perhaps cutting some green chop will show up a loose bolt or a

cracked gear or a broken knife or a bad tire.

Safety First

The only really bad thing about spring is that there seems to be a tendency to forget about safety. Everyone is in a hurry to get all of the work done, which too often means cutting corners. Cutting corners may mean hauling too large a load down the big hill, allowing a young child to drive the equipment, driving too fast for conditions, putting in hay that is too green, or any number of things that could result in loss. "Loss" means lost time, lost equipment, lost people parts, lost feed quality, or a lost barn.

Sometimes it appears as though we do not need as many farmers as we have, but losing a farmer due to an accident is not the way to solve over production problems. Farm people have too much to offer the country — whether they are still farming or have been forced to take another job — to be lost through injury. My plea to you is to be careful and practice good safety rules.

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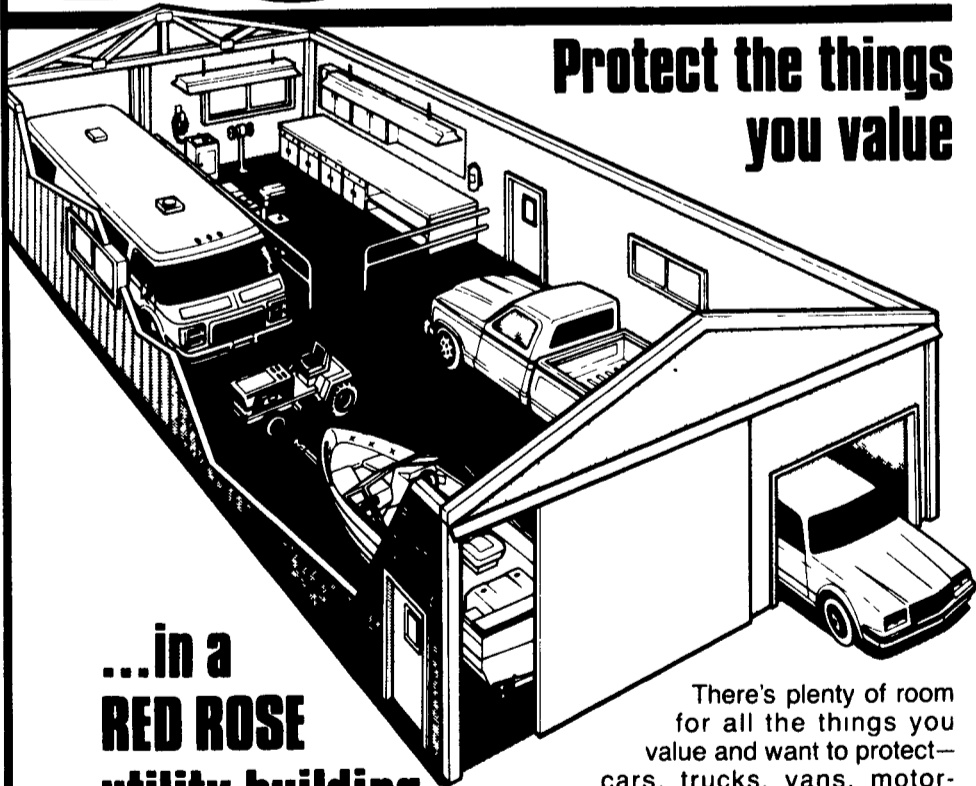
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