



Brockett's Ag Advice

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Take a Vacation!

To help a farmer make good management decisions, he or she must get away from the business from time to time. This vacation from the farm helps in several ways. First, it makes the manager back off from the trees so that person can see the woods. In other words, a farmer who spends all of the time doing farm work often fails to see the overall situation or problem.

Second, it gives the farmer time to spend with the family in a different type of atmosphere than just work.

Third, it acts as a refresher in that for at least a few hours the

farmer is not thinking about business. I remember a number of years ago when I was trying to convince a good friend to go on a trip. His response was "I've never missed a milking and am concerned as to the problems that would come up if I left." Finally he was convinced that a short trip, looking at other dairy farms, would be advantageous. He left with a great deal of trepidation. I'm sure he had many moments when he nearly backed out. Fortunately he had pre-paid his and his wife's fees for the tour. Being a typical farmer, he did not want to lose that, so left on schedule. When

he got home, he was both relieved and somewhat disappointed that everything was in good shape with no lost cows, no damages, and no loss of income. Since then he has made annual use of vacations as a renewal of his management and a rejuvenation of his physical self.

What Type of Vacation?

Vacations can be anything from a one-day trip to a park or picnic area to an extended stay at the shore or in the mountains to a trip to Hawaii or Florida. When most of our kids were home, we had a considerable amount of strawberries. During strawberry season we worked from 6 a.m. until 11 p.m. six days of the week. On Sunday we did chores, went to church, then often went to Reed's Gap or Greenwood recreational areas to swim, picnic, and play ball. At the end of strawberry season and before we got tied up in sweet corn, cantalopes, and other projects we went out to dinner. It was a big event. We usually had to make reservations ahead, because most restaurants in this area were not geared to take on casual parties the size of ours. We and the kids appreciated the break in what

was always a rather hectic time of the year.

Sometimes a vacation is no more than being able to sleep in on a Sunday. Usually this does not work very well because it is too easy to see something that absolutely needs to be done. That becomes the end of any relaxation or change of pace. If short times are all that are available, it would be better to take a few hour trips away from home. Usually that short time away from the business will help you get a better grip on the management routine when you return.

Labor Management

While you are considering your own vacation, what about voluntarily offering your hired man or woman a few extra days or a part of a day off. It would be like an extra bonus and many times would be appreciated more than a monetary bonus.

Perhaps you could say "You can have two days off once we get the second cutting of hay done or the oats combined." This would give the hired person something to anticipate and would give them time to plan ahead. Or you could

offer to extend their regular weekend or vacation time by a day or two. This would be especially helpful if you were planning to really push things for a period of time so the hired help would have a lot of extra hours of work involved. Never take the hired help for granted. Nothing is more discouraging for a person than to do a good job and then receive nothing except fault for not doing more or something different.

Most farmers make a mistake when they hire help, because they do not spell out the work load and expectations they have for hired help development. Most jobs have what is called a job description. Such a document would often save a lot of boss-hired help conflicts. This document could have bonuses, incentives and requirements for pay raises included in it.

When you serve fruit and cheese combinations, remember this handy tip: with sweet fruits (honeydew or grapes), serve a mild-flavored cheese such as Brick; with tart fruits (apples), consider a strong-flavored cheese such as Cheddar.

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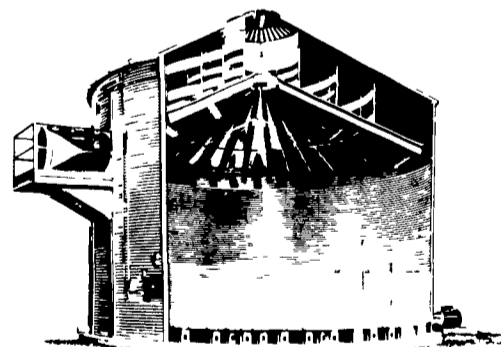
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