

Mothballing Equipment Now Eases Restart Costs Later

NEWARK, Del. — Some farmers who are participating in the dairy buyout program are wondering what to do with their facilities, especially the milking parlor and milking equipment. Some intend to use the barn for other livestock such as beef or sheep, but others just plan to "mothball" it, with the thought of getting back into production five years from now.

What's the best way to do this if you hope to return to dairying in the future? University of Delaware extension agricultural engineer Dr. Jim Scarborough offers the following suggestions for keeping barns and equipment in good shape.

Starting with the barn, first clean up all the hay, straw, spilled feed, silage or other organic material that will probably be laying around. "If you don't do this," Scarborough says, "you're asking for rodent infestations." Also remove any liquids and manure, which will only dry out and be hard to remove at a later date.

Next, drain the water from supply lines in the barn. "You may have to use an air compressor to blow them entirely free of water," the specialist says. Cover drinking bowls with plastic bags, or better yet, turn them upside down to

prevent condensation or leakage problems. Plug all floor drains after the last of the water has been allowed to escape. When the barn is put back into service, the water shut-off valves will need to be cleaned and inspected, as prolonged drying out will affect them.

Close fan inlets, windows and other openings into the barn. A sheet of brown paper on the inside of the windows will protect the glass from a buildup of dust and cobwebs, making it easier to put the windows back in service later. As an added benefit, if the glass should be accidentally broken from the outside, the paper will contain many of the glass fragments. Don't use plastic sheets, Scarborough cautions, as water that condenses on them may rust out sills.

Fan housings should be enclosed on the inside and the outside, or you may find birds and insects nesting in the fans, he says. Also close up all mow openings to keep these pests out.

"There's no reason to have electricity in the barn if you're going to close it up completely," the engineer says. "So shut off power at the entrance box—preferably at the meter pole if you

can do it without interrupting service to the house or other facilities you're still using. Electricity in a closed-off barn is a potential fire hazard you can do without."

Remove and store all motors, except the fan motors if they were enclosed as suggested above. Store them in tight containers or boxes and put them in the milk or utility room where they'll be easy to find the next time you need a motor. You might as well take out the light bulbs, too, and reuse them elsewhere, says Scarborough. Cover all sockets, outlets and switches with duct tape.

If you're not going to sell your gutter cleaners, silo unloader, feed conveyers and the like, give their worn surfaces a generous coating of grease. Generally, any place where the paint has worn off is a good candidate for this rust prevention treatment. If a piece of equipment is exposed to the elements, Scarborough recommends using a grease with a good adhesive, such as a molybdenum disulfide type, or any special compound made for this purpose.

Most of the gaskets, seals, hoses, inflators and belts on equipment will have to be replaced when you go back into production, since

heat, ozone and light will degenerate them. "If you want to try to preserve them," the specialist says, "give them a good dusting with talcum powder (baby powder) and store them in a metal drum with an airtight lid."

As for milking system components, make sure all stall cocks, milk inlets and so on are closed. Remove automatic drain valves with rubber seats and vacuum regulators (if they're the diaphragm type) and store them with other rubber materials in the airtight drum. Store the pulsators there, too.

Allow a cup of oil to be drawn into the inlet port of the vacuum pump just before the last shut-down. After 24 hours, plug the exhaust port. Cover or seal all the electrical control boxes with paper or duct tape. The milk pump and motor need not be removed, but they will need a new seal when they're put back into service, Scarborough says.

Finally, close up and lock the barn and milkhouse.

When starting up production in the future, you'll find the time you spent mothballing your facilities now will more than pay for itself in getting them back into service.

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James E. Brewer, Penn State associate professor of ornamental horticulture, points out that new and existing vines need periodic management to remain attractive and effective. These management tips are given in a correspondence course on Vines, Ground Covers, and Espaliers offered by The Penn-

sylvania State University.

The lessons explain the hardiness, foliage color, fruiting habits, planting, general maintenance, and spray schedules for over 110 vines and ground covers. The last lesson describes the methods and techniques used in training trees and shrubs in a geometrical pattern against a building, wall or fence.

With the help of this course, you may be able to eliminate tedious mowing around trees, close to walls or down a

steep slope, by planting a ground cover. If the blank side of the garage needs landscaping, consider espaliering a plant or shrub suited to the site and soil. Morning glories or scarlet runner beans may hide the unsightly storage shed. These are just a few of the suggestions given in this course to improve home grounds.

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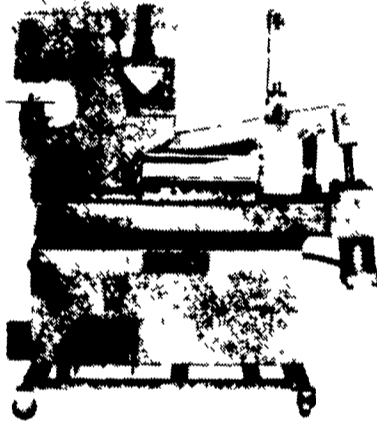
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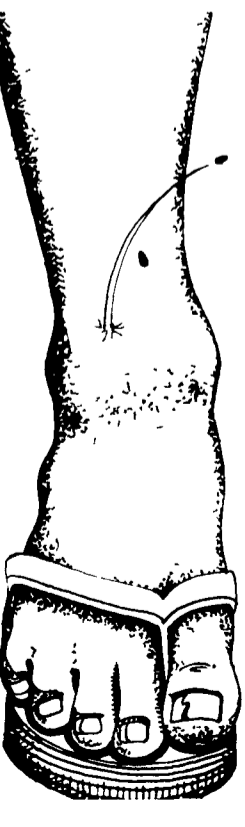
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