



## Brockett's Ag Advice

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### Hiring Farm Labor

Can a family-run farm hire labor after the children leave? This is a perplexing question because the apparent answer is, "Of course it can". However, that does not answer the real question which is much more involved.

The real question is, "Can a family-run farm hire labor after the children leave that is as good as the parents remember the children being?" Now we have a much more complex situation. The parents are older than they were when they started teaching the children how to work. The ready availability of the children, who, despite athletics, band, and the many other activities of most farm children, were more available than hired help will ever be simply because they lived there. The mere fact that the children knew the work routine and did not try to change it or challenge the parental authority, at least in so far as the farm work went, made everything work more smoothly. If the farmer and spouse want to continue to farm after the children leave, they will have a few alternatives to consider.

They could find out the amount of money it will take to be competitive in the market place for labor. This amount is not always equal in dollars to that paid to employees in other lines of work. Sometimes the desire to work outside or work with machinery or livestock is of some compensatory value to those people with that attitude. Once the dollar amount

was calculated, they can decide whether to (a) expand the business enough to pay for the hired help, (b) see if there was room for improvement that would give them enough extra dollars to pay the bill, (c) resign themselves to taking less out of the business for family living, (d) offer some type of incentive to a prospective employee that would offset the dollar value of the salary difference between the amount they could afford and the amount the competition was paying, or (3) look for a working partner.

They could decide to reduce the business to the point where they as a couple could handle it for a few more years. If this decision was made, they would have to determine where to make the cuts, how they would handle the overhead costs, and what priorities they should set. They would also have to decide whether to hire part time help or not. If they did hire part time help, the questions of when, how much, and what pay crop up.

They could examine the operation to see if there was a way to become more mechanized so their present available labor could handle the business. The major decisions here would be (a) can we afford it, (b) can the newly mechanized business go if one of the spouses were to be off for any reason, and (c) does it really accomplish our goals.

#### Hiring and Keeping an Employee

If a farm family does decide to hire people to work on the farm,

the farmer and spouse will probably find themselves in a dilemma. There will be a tug in different directions between the two and within themselves. Each of them has his or her own perspective of (a) what is expected of the hired person, (b) how well the hired person meets these expectations, and (c) the cost to the business caused by the hired person. The farm wife may subconsciously resent the money being paid for work previously done for free or at a much reduced cost. This may be particularly true in families where the wife has done most of the worrying with financial affairs in the past and can see she will have to continue doing so at a time when she was hoping for an easing of the burden. On the other hand, the husband may be inclined to "boss" the hired help as he was used to doing with the children. The two farm family partners may have to make some major changes within themselves if they hope to get and keep competent farm help.

Keeping employees who are interested in the business is a stated desire of most farm employers. What do most employees want? After talking to a number of good farm employees it appears as though there are a number of things that give them job satisfaction. Wages and/or other financial considerations are usually number one. Others are employer honesty in dealings with the employee, employee work schedule, periodic work breaks, meaningfulness of the work expected, recognition of the employee's contribution to the business, and employers attitude on both the business and the money paid to the employee from the business.

1. Wages or total potential income is of course a major consideration. People of different ages and with different goals have different expectations as far as

wages are concerned. Some people are satisfied with relatively low wages if there is some future incentive such as a built-in program for asset ownership, management responsibility, bonus based on quality of work, or fringe benefits such as a house. Others are interested primarily in a job that allows them to take time off at, what to them, critical times of the year such as hunting or fishing. Others, of course, look only at the bottom line which for them is the wage being paid.

2. Honesty on the part of the employer is a factor in employee satisfaction. Nothing turns off an employee faster than for them to perceive that their employer has done them wrong. If a farmer offered an employee bonuses, work incentives, or guaranteed raises, they should be part of a written agreement with stipulations under which those items would be forthcoming and when they would be payable. Often I have found that the wrong an employee feels was done is really a misunderstanding. The employer was not aware of the

way an employee understood a statement made by the employer.

3. Complaints about the employee's work habits can become a bone of contention between the two. One of the biggest areas was "break time." Most employees feel they are entitled to a well earned break if they finish a job up sooner than the employer expected. Some employers feel that they must keep the employee busy every minute. The two attitudes often lead to a confrontation between employer and employee. Both may have to give in to some degree. However, it is the employer's responsibility to make the first move towards compromise. Perhaps the employer may be able to put things in proper perspective if he recognizes that an employee who finishes up in less time than expected is thinking and may need the break as an incentive to continue working. Make work or work put upon the employee's shoulders with inadequate instructions will lead to a poor attitude on the part of the employee about the job and ultimately to shoddy work.

### New Catalog From Hoffman Seed

LANDISVILLE - A new, full-color 32-page catalog, featuring new Funk's G hybrid corn varieties, has been mailed by Hoffman Seed Company, Landisville, Pa. The catalog describes corn, alfalfa, grains, soybeans, grasses and other seeds marketed by the company, which has been a major northeastern seed producer since 1899.

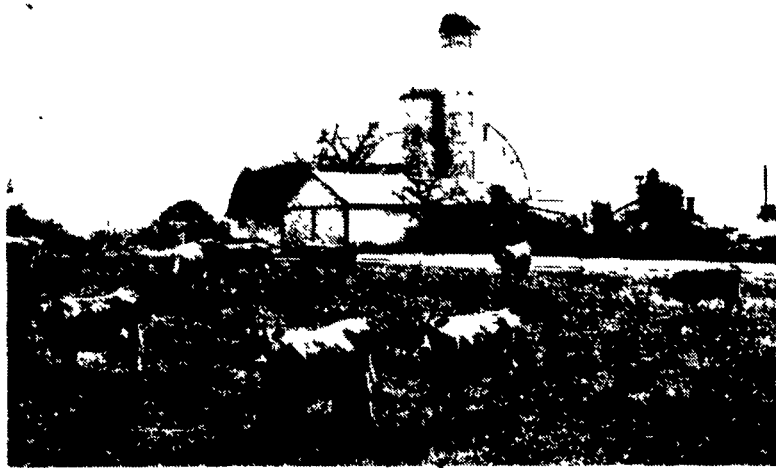
Ivan D. Kauffman, Hoffman sales manager, says the new catalog contains information of recently-developed corn hybrids especially suited to northeast farming conditions. Also included

is information about the Hoffman's special promotion program that offers one free bag of Funk's G hybrid corn for each 10 bags purchased prior to November 26, 1986.

The catalog provides farmers with information for matching specific seed varieties to their local soil and climatic conditions. Hoffman maintains more than 50 test plots throughout the northeast to develop seeds offering the best possible characteristics and yields for local conditions. Hoffman has more than 700 farmer-sales representatives in the northeast.

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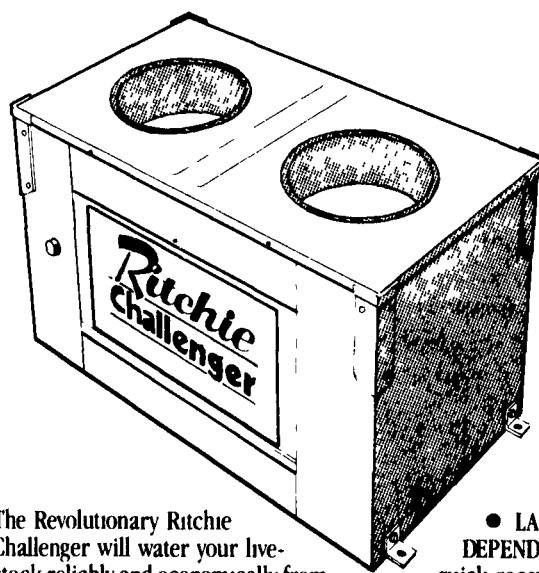
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