

Agri Business Rep Says Dairymen Not To Blame For Bay Pollution

"It's time somebody stood up for our dairy and livestock producers," says Bob Martin of A. B. C. Groff Farm Equipment at New Holland. Farmers have been taking a bum rap. Environmentalists want to blame them for the pollution in Chesapeake Bay.

The accusation doesn't stand up when you look at the facts, Martin emphasizes, except for those farmers who aren't controlling soil erosion. When soil erodes into the streams and rivers, it takes plant food with it and does cause pollution, but it isn't necessary. It is not fair to blame the good farmers who are keeping their soil at home.

Dairymen, especially, get good marks from Martin because they have a lot of land in hay crops. That is the best protection against erosion, says Martin. Silage and grain producers who use no-till planting are doing their share to protect the bay too. No-till planting with some trash left on top of the ground between the rows slows, or eliminates, run off.

Some experts want to claim we are producing too much manure and that this is the problem for the bay. Again, the claim doesn't hold up if you stop to think about it, says Martin. Of course there is a problem if the soil erodes.

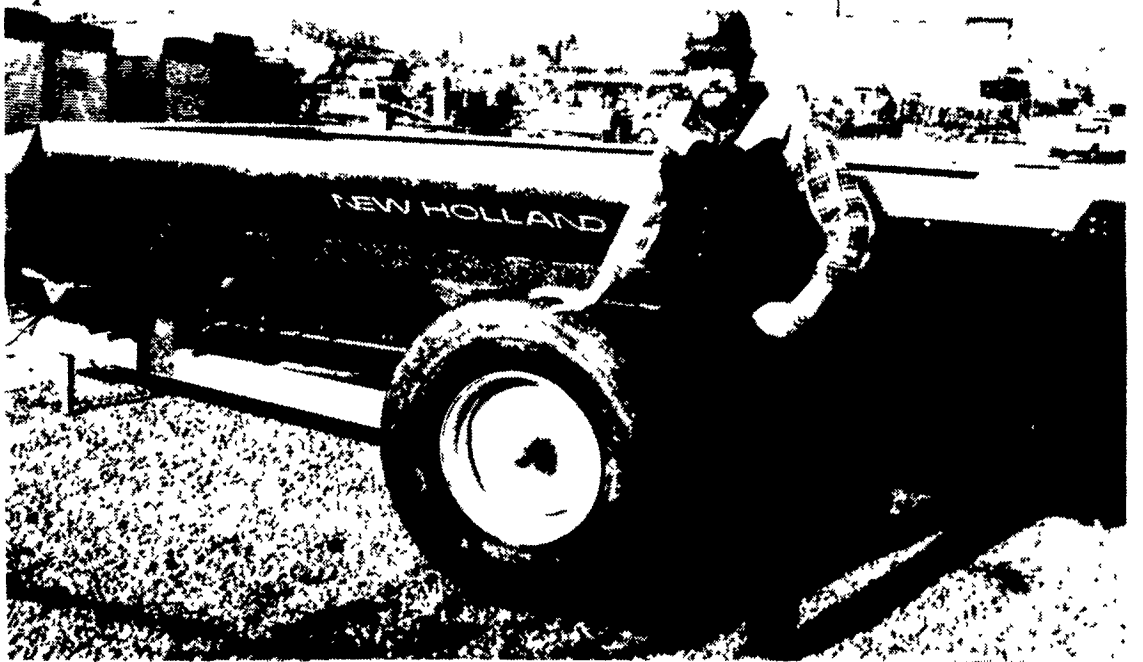
It's only the big confinement poultry and hog operations that have more manure than they use for crops, and these systems aren't really comparable to dairy farms.

Dairymen are recycling the plant food in the manure to grow the next year's crops. Almost all have more acres than they need to use the manure without a nutrient buildup. The majority could add a lot of cows before they reach the limits.

If we grow corn for silage and plant barley, rye or wheat in that land after silage harvest we can take off a cereal silage crop in the spring by the time it's time to plant corn again. If we do that we can take off eight to twelve tons of wheat silage in addition to the 25 tons of plant food. Three hundred pounds of nitrogen, 100 pounds of phosphate and 250 pounds of potassium is about the amount you can expect to remove per acre in the silage.

That is more plant food than you could expect to haul out to the field from a large, high producing cow in a year's time, Martin points out. This simply means we could increase dairy stocking rates to a cow per acre before we start to crowd the limit; and that isn't counting the hay land.

The environmentalists want to subtract our hay land when they talk about the acres available for spreading manure. This is an illusion too! They get away with it until you think about it. We usually don't like to spread manure on alfalfa during the life of the stand, but we know we can put on a lot of manure in the year before seeding alfalfa. That way we put the plant food "in the bank" for later use



Bob Martin, Groff's Farm Equipment at New Holland says it's time somebody stood up for dairy and livestock producers who are being blamed for pollution they aren't causing. He says dairymen can increase cow numbers before they approach the safe limits of land for manure disposal.

while the alfalfa is producing. That puts the alfalfa acres back into the picture for land available for spreading. When you do that you see we don't have too many cows at all.

We would have plenty of land for the poultry and hog manure too if we had the acres used to grow the grain consumed in the confinement systems. There is a problem where

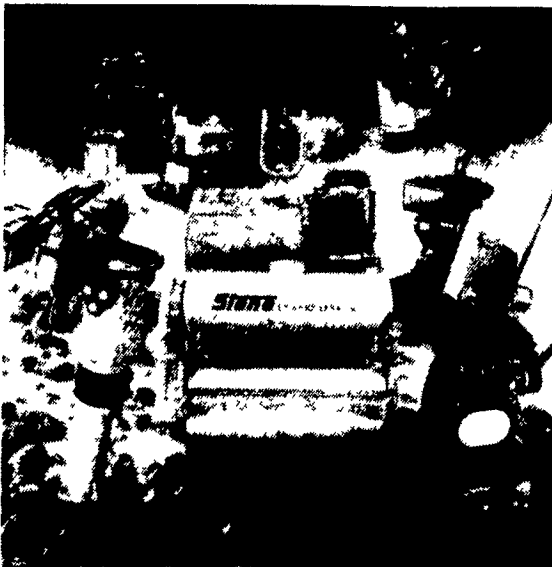
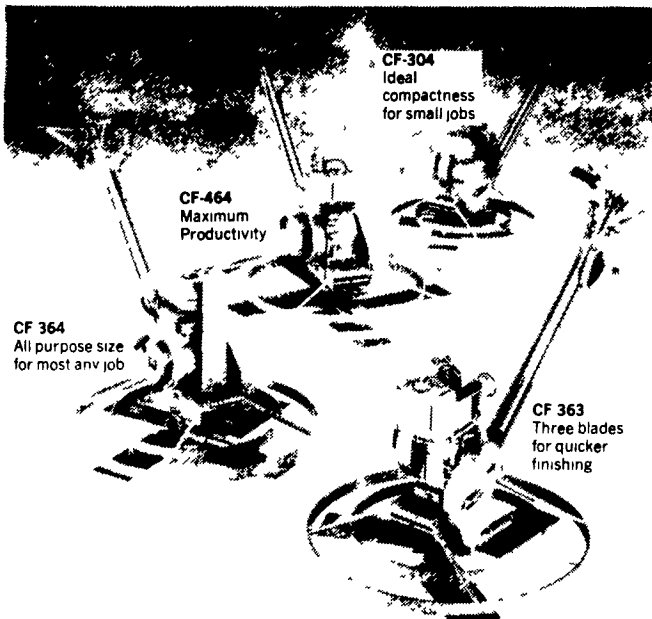
the grain is bought in and the land isn't available for manure spreading.

However, it already appears we can solve this one too. Composting poultry and hog waste "tames the bear." You don't need all the corn cobs that come with the shelled corn to mix with the manure to get good compost, and compost is a cash commodity now-a-days, notes

Martin. People are glad to buy it for lawns, flower gardens and indoor plants.

Take it all together, we shouldn't be scolding our farmers for the problems in the Chesapeake Bay, except for those who aren't controlling erosion, says Martin. The real problem is the pollution from the towns and industry, but nobody wants to say much about that. It's easier to go after farmers.

CHECK OUR WINTER SPECIALS

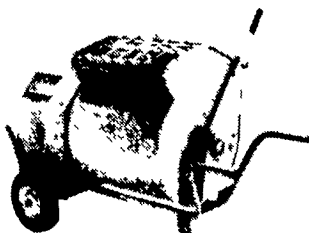


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