

Saving Soil Important To Chester County Dairyman

BY MARJORIE KEEN
Chester Co. Correspondent

Chester County's Conservation Farmer of the Year, Charles H. Gable of Elverson, found that he had two additional acres of pasture on Conebella Farm when he completed his soil conservation plan. By building a pond and installing 1150 feet of tile he drained low, wet ground and increased the pasture for his 130 head of Ayrshire cattle.

Gable said new marshland ecology legislation would prevent him from following the drainage plan in the same way today. However, he began the conservation measures in 1968 at the time 38 acres were added to the farm. Over the next 10 years Gable removed 2000 feet of fence rows and put in 8600 feet of terraces and 2500 feet of waterways to prevent erosion.

Recently Gable installed 250 feet of waterway in a rented field. "People said I was crazy," he smiled. He explained his philosophy of "leaving more wood on the pile" than he found.

Gable grows basically alfalfa and corn, with some wheat. His son Donald returned to work on the family farm after completing a

degree at Penn State in 1985. Donald's wife Pam, has also been handling farm chores.

Gable was born on the farm purchased by his grandfather about 60 years ago. Conebella was named for two stations on the Reading branch of the Wilmington and Northern Railroad—Conestoga and Isabella. The railroad tracks cross a corner of the pasture.

In the 1930's Gable's father started the Ayrshire herd. Today 100 percent of the herd is homebred and the Gables are noted as breeders of registered Ayrshires. At the National Ayrshire Breeders Association meeting in New Hampshire in late April Gable expects to be elected a national director and also to receive the Constructive Breeder Award.

At one time Gable was president of the Pennsylvania Ayrshire Breeders Association. When the world conference of Ayrshire Breeders meets in Pennsylvania in the fall of 1988 Conebella Farm will be a stop on the tour for delegates. The Gable home proudly displays the red ribbon won by a Conebella Farm Ayrshire at the national show in 1980.

In addition to his interests in dairying and soil conservation, Gable is a director of the Chester County Water Resources Authority. He has also been active in the Chester-Delaware County Farmers Association.

The 1986 Soil Conservation Award was announced at the February Crops Day by Charles Harris, Chairman of the Chester County Conservation District, Elbert Wells, District Conservationist of the U.S. Soil Conservation Service, said that determining factors in Gable's selection for the fourth annual award were (1) an innovative approach to protecting the resource base, (2) use of the newest methods and techniques and (3) the amount of work required to implement the farm plan. Approximately 3000 Chester County landowners have applied for plans to combat soil erosion.



With help from his son Donald and his wife Pam, Charles Gable (right) operates Conebella Farm, a 130-head Ayrshire operation. Gable was named Chester County Conservation Farmer of the Year.

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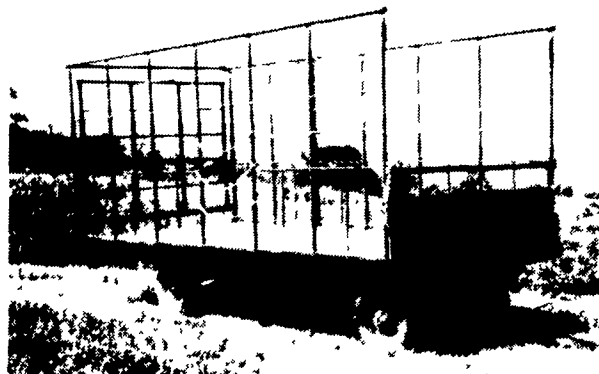
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