

Farm Philosophy

By
Newton Bair

A Little Bit Of Dirt

A persnickety person might cringe at the word "dirt," especially when talking about the soil. That's one of the cranky things about English. Words may not mean what they say. The farm is really the soil, but if a little of the same gets tracked onto the rug, it's dirt. The meaning is flavored by the context.

What we really mean to look at here is the great disparity in value that is placed on a little bit of dirt. It's not only the meaning of the word that gets distorted, but also the value that is placed on it. Whether we talk sections, or acres, or by the pound, it's all the same stuff. But what a difference in price!

You can buy a small bag of potting soil, which is nothing more than dehydrated muck, for about eight cents a pound at the garden store. Since it is mostly organic matter it contains very little mineral soil, so even when finally spilled on the garden it does not even replace what the wind blows away on a breezy day. It may even be worth what it costs, just to get the little plants off to a good start. And it is a good place to start to

the value of dirt into the right perspective.

The years I spent on a small Island of coral limestone rock taught me a lesson on the value of soil. We were sent there to open up new farms, and to teach the natives agriculture. The irony of it was, there was so very little soil there. It only existed in small pockets, which we called "potholes". It was merely a mix of sand and a little organic material which had drifted into the holes in the rock. That's where the people grew their yams, pigeon peas, and papayas. The rest was boulders laid on solid rock.

In order to make a farm, or even a garden, the boulders had to be bulldozed into large windrows about three hundred feet apart. Then we proceeded to "plow" the area in between with a rock plow attached to a dozer blade. This turned up more rock, of a softer variety, which could then be crushed into small particles by repeated disking and rolling with a 30 ton grid roller. We literally manufactured soil, where none had previously existed. Not soil as we know it. Just crushed coral rock.

as sterile as a pile of crushed limestone.

Now, you can take coarsely crushed lime rock, add a hefty shot of 18-26-18 (at the rate of 800 pounds per acre) and with sufficient water it will grow respectable crops. But at what a cost! At today's prices you'll go broke before you start. It's only practical if there is no other source of food or fodder available. When you are hungry or sick of eating fish, you'll do almost anything to grow food.

But back to the value of soil. We need to appreciate what we have and take care of it. The soil-loss

statistics are truly awesome. Four tons of topsoil can wash down the Susquehanna in a single season from an unprotected acre. (That's 40 tons of good soil, off a 10-acre cornfield with an eight percent slope and no cover). What would it cost to haul that much soil back and spread it evenly over the field? We don't think much about that, because we think that we can afford to lose what we do not see anyway. If you can see even small gullies across the rows after a severe storm, you've probably lost eight to 10 tons of soil per acre or more.

It may be awhile until we need to worry about crushing rock to create soil. But my awareness of it's value is deepened by the aching back and stiff muscles from spooning soil from the banks of the Quittapahilla back onto the lawn and flower beds. Even the stuff under my fingernails has value, and hates to be wasted by flushing down the drain.

There is only a fine line between the dictionary definition of soil, and what I call "A little bit of dirt." But someday, somewhere, it may make the difference between life and death.

New Jersey Initiates Dairy Of Distinction Program

CEDAR KNOLLS, N.J. — New Jersey dairy producers can now qualify their farms to receive the "Dairy of Distinction" award. The Garden State has become the latest participant in the program which is known officially as the Northeast Dairy Farm Beautification Program.

Entries are now being accepted from all New Jersey dairy farmers to enter their farm for this year's judging. The deadline for entering is May 15, and judging will take place during the month of June.

According to Sue Reynolds, executive secretary for the Dairy of Distinction program, "New Jersey is the third state to enter the Northeast program. New York and Pennsylvania have already successfully implemented the program in their areas." Other

interested states include Vermont and New Hampshire.

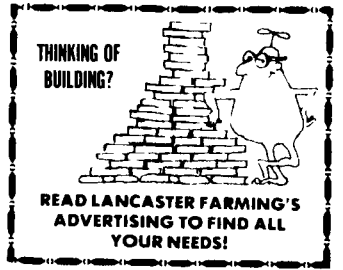
The farm beautification program is based on the concept that attractive farmsteads enhance consumer confidence in the wholesomeness of milk and encourage public support for the dairy industry. The award is also a method of recognizing farmers who have made a special effort in keeping their farms clean, attractive and well-maintained.

At the program's organizational meeting held in March, the New Jersey area was divided into two districts. District 21A is the territory north of Interstate 195, while District 21B is all areas south of that highway.

A board was appointed with the following members: August Knispel, Pittstown; Charles

Rogers, Ringoes; Stuart Hartung, Phillipsburg; Jerry Farnham, Flemington; Joy Ricker, Sussex. August Knispel was elected president.

For further information and applications on the Dairy of Distinction program, contact the American Dairy Association and Dairy Council at 800-HOT-MILK, in New Jersey and Pennsylvania, and 800-ADA-MILK, in New York



Use These Two Deadly Weapons Against Calf Scours

Now Fight Fatal E. Coli Scours By Placing Antibodies Directly Into The Calf.

Genecol® 99

brand

Genecol® 99. A new way to prevent death losses due to E. coli scours. A more effective way to end the economic drain caused by this widespread disease of beef and dairy calves. And it's easy to use. Just keep a supply handy to administer orally to calves at birth

Each **\$7.95**

10 or More **\$7.15**



1 Pk. **\$1.75**

12 or More **\$1.50**

SCOURLYTE

brand

FLUID MANAGEMENT FORMULA

Oral electrolytes with dextrose and DIAMYLEX® brand pregelatinized starch for optimal fluid absorption in the small and large intestines.

Ingredients:

Dextrose, DIAMYLEX® brand pregelatinized starch, sodium chloride, sodium citrate, powered cellulose, potassium chloride.

We Ship UPS Everyday Order \$20.00 Or More And We Pay The Freight

Key-Aid Distributors

225 Wood Corner Rd., Lititz, PA 17543
717-738-4241

Call Us Toll Free 1-800-453-9243
In PA Call 1-800-253-9243

PAUL B. ZIMMERMAN INC.

GATES and FENCING

Standard Heights For Gates & Fencing:
• 38" High - 4 Bar • 48" High - 5 Bar • 54" High - 6 Bar

NOTE:

- 13 Ga. steel 15% heavier than 14 Ga. steel
- 13 Ga. steel 45% heavier than 16 Ga. steel
- 13 Ga. steel 85% heavier than 18 Ga. steel

All Gates & Fencing Made Of 1.9" Outside Diameter High Yield Steel Tubing With 13 Ga. Wall

SLANT BAR FEED THRU FENCE

Custom Built To Any Length

PAUL B. ZIMMERMAN, INC.

295 Woodcorner Rd.
Lititz, PA 17543
1 Mile West of Ephrata
Phone: 717-738-1121

Use These Two Deadly Weapons Against Calf Scours

Now Fight Fatal E. Coli Scours By Placing Antibodies Directly Into The Calf.

Genecol® 99

brand

Genecol® 99. A new way to prevent death losses due to E. coli scours. A more effective way to end the economic drain caused by this widespread disease of beef and dairy calves. And it's easy to use. Just keep a supply handy to administer orally to calves at birth

Each **\$7.95**

10 or More **\$7.15**

1 Pk. **\$1.75**

12 or More **\$1.50**

SCOURLYTE brand

FLUID MANAGEMENT FORMULA

Oral electrolytes with dextrose and DIAMYLEX® brand pregelatinized starch for optimal fluid absorption in the small and large intestines.

Ingredients:
Dextrose, DIAMYLEX® brand pregelatinized starch, sodium chloride, sodium citrate, powered cellulose, potassium chloride.

We Ship UPS Everyday Order \$20.00 Or More And We Pay The Freight

Key-Aid Distributors

225 Wood Corner Rd., Lititz, PA 17543
717-738-4241

Call Us Toll Free 1-800-453-9243
In PA Call 1-800-253-9243