



CORN TALK NEWS

PENNSYLVANIA MASTER CORN GROWERS ASSOC., INC.



Mike Glenn with a few of the calves he raises in the old stanchion barn.

Brothers Pay Attention

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hay, help to milk, and feed the cows corn silage.

"They're good workers," Richard said. "I don't know what I'd do without them." They have been with the Glenn brothers for eight years.

The high-producing cows are fed 8 - 12 pounds of top-dress in the milking parlor. The herd is fed haylage and high moisture corn on the bunk.

The farm is on a conservation plan and a manure plan with the ASCS office. Water from the parlor goes to a holding tank, then is spread on the fields with a vacuum tank.

They are careful to protect the winding trout stream that runs below the barn from any runoff.

Richard and his wife, Pamela, live in the large stone house on the farm. They have two sons, Jeff, 14, and Thomas, 11, who help on the farm weekends and summers. Mike's wife, Sharon, works for the Forestry Department in McConnellsburg, and Dave's wife, Sheila, works at Letterkenny Army Depot in Chambersburg.

Their mother, Marjorie, is a director of Pennsylvania Farm Women.



PENNSYLVANIA MASTER CORN GROWERS ASSOCIATION

Between The Rows

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competition. If you're not doing this soon, you find yourself left behind by the crowd.

How can we continue to improve various aspects of our operation? There are no easy answers anymore and it's becoming increasingly difficult to rely on outside experts to provide us with answers that are appropriate for our own situations. As a result, I think we will need to place more emphasis on evaluating products and practices under local conditions.

Management experts tell us that we should be relying more on data to make decisions rather than opinions. What does all this have to do with our corn crop this year?

Well, I think you should spend a little time or money on evaluating something in your production system this year. This doesn't necessarily mean you have to do a strip trial or some other type of on-farm research, but it does mean you'll have to take some time and scrutinize some aspect of your program.

Basic items to evaluate are things like weed escapes, plant populations, yields, soil test levels, rootworm beetle counts or disease levels. More

advanced items to be looking at would include stand uniformity, soil compaction potential, hybrid performance, herbicide and insecticide cost effectiveness, nutrient deficiency symptoms, and soil nutrient trends over time. Still more advanced things to evaluate would be items such as hybrid adaptation to different soils, the need for starter fertilizer, and the cost effectiveness of equipment adaptations that speed planting and harvesting.

By collecting a little of your own information on these items, you'll be in a better position to make better decisions next year. Better decisions mean a more efficient operation that is moving ahead, not falling behind.

A little bit of good evaluation can go a long way. A few hours invested in planning a little comparison this year and next may prevent a decade of continuing an unprofitable practice.

A good example of the need for evaluation I've encountered recently is in the issue of zone tillage attachments for no-till corn planters. While they seem to be appealing, there really is little data available to justify their use in areas where no-till has worked well.

If I were making an investment in this technology, I'd be

doing a few side-by-side comparisons to see if they really do improve populations and yields under my conditions.

A word of caution is necessary in doing side-by-side or any other types of on-farm research. Our soils are quite variable and you want to be sure to repeat your comparison several times to minimize the potential for yield differences caused by soil type.

More than once I've been surprised by yield differences caused just by the position in the field. If you're not careful, these kind of differences can lead you astray. This is especially true if your favorite treatment comes out on top.

One of the challenges in planning evaluations is deciding what to evaluate and how many resources to devote to this activity. Realistically, focusing on one to three key items is probably enough for anyone provided you have a handle on some of the basic scouting information.

If you don't think you have time for some type of evaluation this year, consider hiring someone to do it. There are a growing number of crop consultants and scouts that are available and willing to help out in this area.

If you're like me, you've found out by now that there are a lot more good questions than good answers. Let's take some time this year and work on getting some more good answers by doing a little better job of evaluating and finding out what's going on in our own corn production system.



Employees Bill, left and Jason Harmon bed the freestalls.

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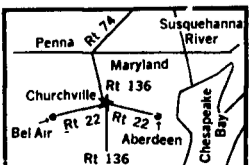
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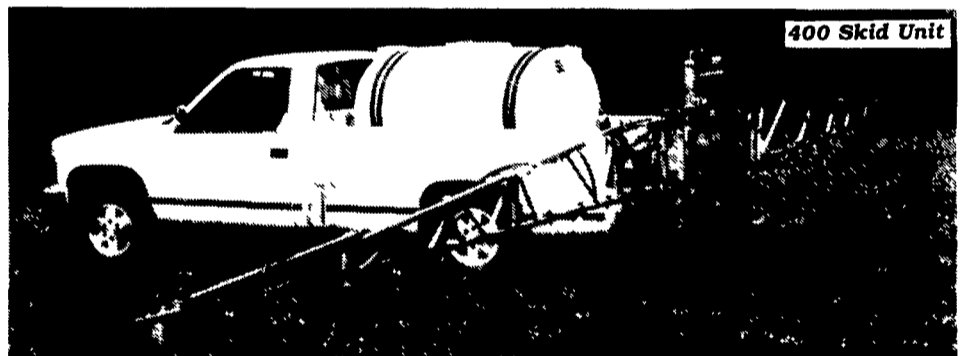
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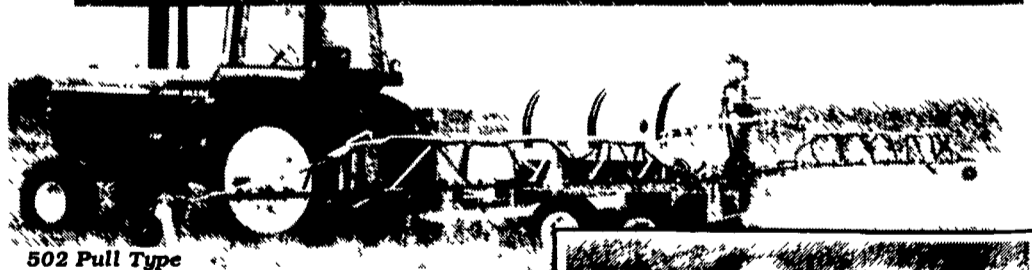
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