

# Basics Of Grass Growth, Watering Systems At Grazing Field Day

**ANDY ANDREWS**  
Lancaster Farming Staff  
HONEY GROVE (Juniata Co.)  
— Make plans to see how effectively rotational grazing can be used at the fifth annual Pasturing 501 Field Day, to be held here at Tuscarora Mountain Acres, operated by Ed and Lorraine Rits, on Thursday, Sept. 1, from 9 a.m.-3:30 p.m.

At the field day, a host of grazing experts from industry, Penn State, and farm-related organizations will be on hand to provide information on how to put grazing to use. Included will be an overview of grazing basics, fence and water systems, erosion control structures, and use of various types of grasses for effective feed management.

The experience with soil loss after a heavy rain convinced Ed Rits that grass was the way to go. Years ago, after seeing how ineffective contour strips were in stopping erosion on some of beef farmer Ed Rits' cropland, instead of rotating corn into rye, Rits decided to plant grass and use grazing to feed his beef animals. "The important thing is learning how grass grows," said Rits during a recent telephone interview with *Lancaster Farming*. "That's the whole key to the grazing program."

Rits said that he has grazed for more than 30 years. He farms 100 acres, of which 16 hillier acres are under a conservation reserve program. All of the remaining acres are in grazing.

Of the acreage, Rits maintains about 40 acres of orchard grass, nine acres of alfalfa, 12 acres of ryegrass, 20 acres of bluegrass, two acres of timothy, and another two acres of matua bromegrass.

In June, the county, along with a great portion of the region, was in the midst of a drought. Many of the fields dried up, particularly the grass fields, according to Rits. Only the alfalfa fields continued to grow. But rains came at the end of June, and from then on the grass came back.

Recently, rains dropped four-tenths to five-tenths of an inch at a time to promote regrowth of the grass.

Rits will explain, at the field day, how using grazing methods at his farm helped increase savings on feed and improve soil conditions.

Also, Rits will explain his use of portable watering systems in his paddocks, including 25-gallon units.

One important part of water system management is to place the water tubs in the paddock first and then let the cattle in. Rits said there are a few animals, when moved, that need water right away, and having the water ready when the animals arrive prevents crowding.

"It's all a matter of management," said Rits.

Also scheduled at the meeting is an overview of fence posts and wire systems that Rits uses.

Last year, about 75 people attended the field day from 13 counties and three states.

Rits said that the trend in Pennsylvania is for farmers to become small and part-time operators, and considering ways to save on equipment and labor will be important.

The pasture field day is sponsored by the Pennsylvania Association for Sustainable Agriculture (PASA) with help from a variety of cooperating industries and

agencies.

Rits' Tuscarora Mountain Acres Farm is located about 26 miles northeast of the Pa. Turnpike (Exit 14) on Rt. 75 north. From the turnpike, after East Waterford, take the next road left (Township Road). Traveling from Honey Grove south on Rt. 75, take the first right (Township Road). The farm is about 1/2 mile from Rt. 75.

The field day will be held rain or shine. Registration is \$5, which includes lunch. For more information, contact Ed Rits at RR1 Box 87, Honey Grove, PA 17035, (717) 734-3745.

- 12:45 Conservation Service
  - Streambank Fencing
  - Ed Willow, PA Game Commission
  - 1:00 Erosion Control Structures
  - Ed Rits, Host Farmer
  - 1:20 Nutrient Management Legislation Update
  - Lee Bentz, PA Department of Agriculture
  - 1:35 Nutrient Management Planning
  - Dane Lauver, Juniata County Conservation District
  - 2:05 Compost/Raw Manure Demonstration
  - Ed Rits, Host Farmer
  - 2:30 New Fence Construction
  - Beaver Fence System, McVeytown, PA
  - 2:45 Matua Bromegrass — Kupa White Clover — Citald Ryegrass
  - John Everhart, USDA Pasture Research Lab
  - Hall, Calvert, Rits
- RESERVATIONS APPRECIATED — PHONE 717-734-3745

This is the schedule of events for the Pasturing 501 Field Day.

PASTURING 501	
Ed Rits Farm — Honey Grove, PA	
September 1, 1994	
A.M.	
9:00	Registration - \$5.00 fee includes lunch
9:30	Welcome to Tuscarora Mountain Acres - Introduction to Grazing
	Ed Rits, host farmer
9:45	Grazing Basics
	Tom Calvert, USDA - Soil Conservation Service
10:30	Plant Growth and Management
	Dr. Marvin Hall, Penn State University Agronomy Department
11:15	Fence and Water Systems
	Ed Rits, Rits Consulting Services
P.M.	
12:00	Lunch — Introductions — Pasture Walk
12:30	Cost Sharing
	Nancy Kaufman, Agricultural Stabilization &

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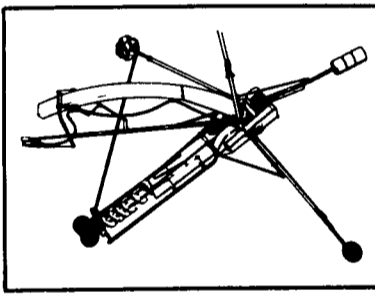
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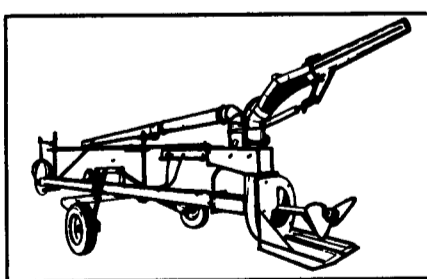
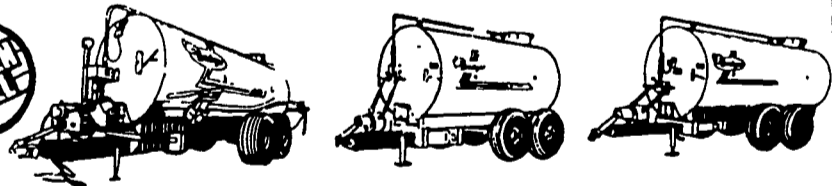
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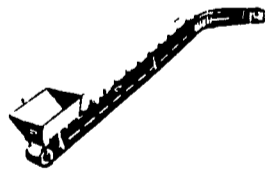
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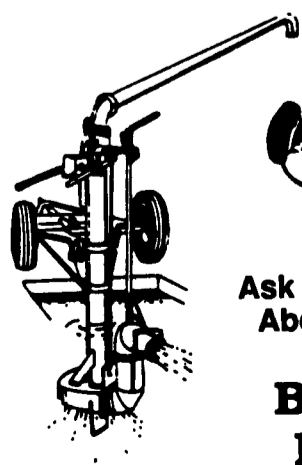
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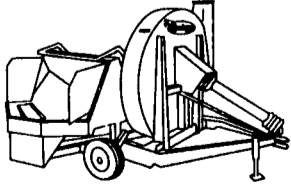
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