

Waste Water Rich

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driver spray the right field?

With good communication and a "Plan", farmers and processing plants both can win. In this situation, Fairmont Foods in Belleville does produce sludge on a regular basis. To prevent hydrologic loading, or excess water on the soil for an extended period of time, Rodgers allows Fairmont to store sludge in his liquid manure tanks at Plum Bottom.

Fairmount Foods buys raw milk from 183 dairy farmers — 100 in Mifflin County, 65 in Huntingdon County, and 18 in western Centre County. The Belleville plant makes ice cream mix, cottage cheese, French onion dip, sour cream and other dairy products. After creating these dairy delights, Fairmont scrubs down the equipment.



Sonny Golden, a nutritionist at Golden and Associates in Susquehanna County, talks about seeing pastures as a multiple source of nutrients for animals.

The clearest water goes to the Water Authority. Hog farmers pick up the whey. What's left is sludge - a water and sediment mixture.

"We needed an outlet for the sludge," said Susan Geringer, plant manager at Fairmont Foods. "It's nice that the farmers who produce the raw milk can benefit from the sludge."

As for nutrients, Geringer said the sludge is high in phosphorus, has medium levels of potassium, low levels of nitrogen, and is neutral (pH of 7.4). Yes it has minute amounts of detergent — detergent that is distilled, regulated, and neutralized.

Rodgers spreads approximately one to three loads of sludge a year or a rate from the truck of 15,000 gallons per acre. In practical terms, that's about a half inch of rain. The sludge truck follows Rodgers' Ayrshire herd through the rotation — as the cattle are moved out of a pasture, the truck pulls in. The cattle enter that same pasture five weeks later.

In one pasture, John Rodgers seeded the European legume bird's-foot trefoil and timothy 40 years ago. Over time, the pasture mix has slowly disappeared as bluegrass has taken over. The 40-acre pasture, in rotational grazing for the past five years, has received minimal off-farm inputs except for the sludge, and supports 17 to 19 heifers at a time.

"The nice thing about rotational



Penn State's Forage Specialist Marvin Hall leads a tour into the pastures to see first-hand each pasture's health and the various types of plant species.

grazing," said Rodgers, "is the tremendous contribution to feed — and there's no cost in harvesting!"

In a field walk, Penn State Forage Specialist Marvin Hall reviewed each of six rotational pastures. He discussed the health of each pasture and plant species such as white clover, bluegrass, and bird's-foot/timothy mix.

In the last pasture, Sonny Golden, a grazing consultant and nutritionist from Springville, Susquehanna County, encouraged farmers to see pastures as a multiple source of nutrients for animal, including protein, fat, carbohydrates, minerals and vitamins. Golden said the nutritional make-up of each pasture varies spring through fall.

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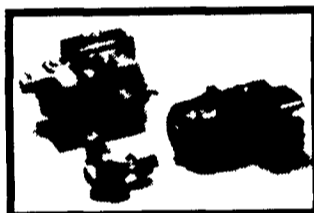
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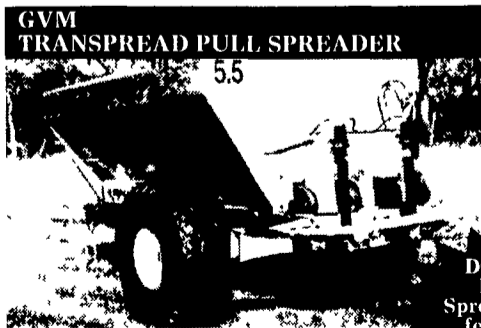
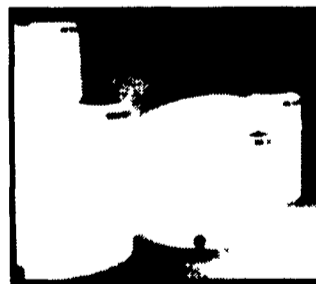
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