

Boyce's Lil' Ponderosa Farm: One Giant Grazing Experiment

ANDY ANDREWS
Lancaster Farming Staff
CARLISLE (Cumberland Co.)
—On a somewhat dreary, overcast day, purebred Angus breeder Bob Boyce leans on a stone wall of his porch, binoculars in hand, observing the cattle in his fields.

Looking toward the southeast, Boyce is watching, through the mist, whether a couple of his cows are coming into heat.

More than a dozen cows either recline, chewing away happily, or meander about, searching for fresh, new growth of an alfalfa-grass mixture on a one-acre paddock on the intensively rotationally grazed farm.

"Isn't this a great spot to keep an eye on the cows?" he says, pointing to the deck on which lawn chairs and a gas-fired grill sit.

He gazes on many of the Angus, but "number 10" — he refers to all the cattle by numbers — stands out.

"Looks like you're begging, number 10," says Boyce over the peaceful sounds of a wind chime. "Yeah, I think she's ready."

To Boyce, the day was exciting because he was about to breed another cow, expanding his steadily growing herd base with some improved genetics.

The grazer and Cumberland County farmer founded Lil' Ponderosa Enterprises, a "grand experiment" in modern farming. In addition to a rotationally grazed cow-calf farm, Lil' Ponderosa is

the headquarters for Boyce's haying and fencing equipment dealership. He also sells watering systems, alfalfa and other seeds, and freezer beef and breeding stock. Boyce even operates farm service and financial planning businesses.

Boyce makes it his business to experiment, to try new strategies, as he builds his breeding and freezer beef operation.

He markets freezer beef to more than 50 customers from Pennsylvania and other states, including Virginia, Maryland, and New Jersey.

"My dad had a saying," said Boyce as he reviewed Angus Association registrations. "You're dead when you stop learning."

As he slowly develops his farm and customer base, Boyce is busy experimenting. Those experiments can be as complex as choosing the best alfalfa-grass mix on his more than 150 acres (out of about 256 acres tillable, on three farms) of pastureland, in partnership with Ron Deihl. Or they can be as simple as how to improve soil fertility in selected spots by placing round hay bales and, while cattle eat the hay, spread manure on the ground.

They also include fencing equipment experiments (Boyce prefers the "pigtail" fence posts to allow easy attachment to establish paddocks inside the primary fencing). They include watering systems (one-inch lines buried to 36 inches in depth) to reduce the dis-



The focus of a lot of Boyce and Deihl's pasture studies: finding the best mix. "I'm trying to find the best pasture mixes to grow on dry, shaley ground," he said.

tance that animals have to walk for water.

The focus of a lot of Boyce and Deihl's pasture studies: finding the best all-season mixture.

"I'm trying to find the best pasture mixes to grow on dry, shaley ground," Boyce said.

In a remote corner of his property, Boyce cleared trees and brush using a bulldozer. After he pushed the debris aside and applied lime to the area, Boyce used a lane border-

ing fencerow as an experiment. On the left side, next to woodland to provide shade for the grazing animals, looking down a long slope, he disced over and seeded ryegrass. On the right side, near the fence, he seeded an orchardgrass-perennial ryegrass mix. He uses no fescue on the farm.

Boyce is trying to figure out what types of grasses to use in exercise or "sacrifice" areas. The farm soils are a combination of Weikert and Berks.

But that's not the end of Boyce's experiments. His at-home field-

test sites are dotted throughout the farm, from one corner to the next.

In 1986, two years after retiring from 17 years as a marketing professional for AT&T, Boyce and his wife Kate decided to settle on the farm, formerly owned by Mr. and Mrs. Carroll Miller. Boyce discovered the farm while working under contract to Boeing Computer Services in the Cumberland Valley.

In 1996 Boyce started the purebred black Angus operation with nine head. The next year, herd size was increased to 25 head. This

(Turn to Page A24)

ZIMMERMAN

MFG. CORP.

125 King Court/
Hollander Rd.
New Holland, PA 17557
(717) 354-9611

Contact Us For
Literature Or
The Dealer
Nearest You!

A Full Line Of EFFICIENT BELT DRIVE FANS

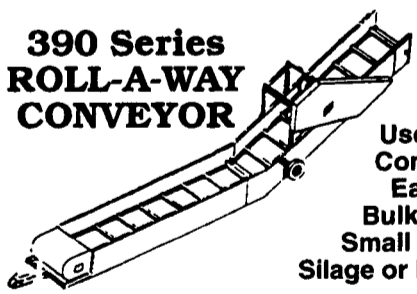


Exhaust Fan
w/Housing & shutter
24", 36", 48"

36" & 48" Portable
Circulating Fans

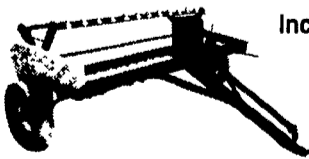


390 Series ROLL-A-WAY CONVEYOR



Useful For
Conveying
Ear Corn,
Bulk Feeds,
Small Grains,
Silage or Manure

ZIMMERMAN HEAVY DUTY HAY TEDDER - 790 SERIES



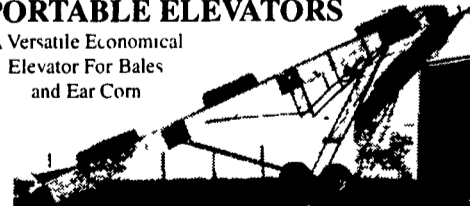
Increases hay crop
value with
faster drying
time...

880 SERIES BALE ELEVATOR AND MOW CONVEYOR

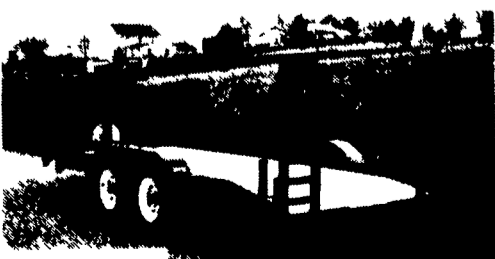


380 SERIES PORTABLE ELEVATORS

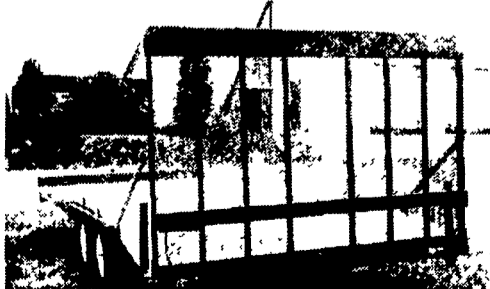
A Versatile Economical
Elevator For Bales
and Ear Corn



WELL BALANCED, RUGGEDLY BUILT FOR MANY
YEARS OF TROUBLE FREE SERVICE



RT SERIES



FRT SERIES

RT and FRT Series Trailers Available In 5000# thru 12,000# GVW
We Also Build Other Models, Sizes, and Capacities. Call For Information

Randall G. Renninger

Certified Public Accountant

Specializing in agriculture and construction industries

"We help business people discover ways to cut costs, save taxes, and be more profitable"

Call about our FREE seminars

535 W. Orange Street, Lancaster, Pa. 17603
(717) 299-6480 ♦ Fax (717) 299-6390

A & E ENTERPRISES, INC.

Former TRI-COUNTY Staff

Hog System Specialists

Design, Build, & Service



- * EQUIPMENT
- * PARTS
- * SERVICE
- * REMODELING
- * NEW BUILDINGS

Finishing Contracts Available - Call For Details

A & E ENTERPRISES, INC.

28 Evergreen Road
Lebanon, PA 17042

(800) 220-1545 or (717) 274-3488

CHECK OUR PRICES
BEFORE YOU BUY