

# Alfalfa Trials Offer Farmers Unbiased Information

**GAIL STROCK**  
Mifflin Co. Correspondent

**ROCKSPRING (Centre Co.)** — Dick Todd could be the most meticulous alfalfa producer in the state.

He intensively manages more than 200 varieties at two Pennsylvania locations, carefully recording alfalfa variety, weather conditions, planting and harvesting dates, soil test information, disease and pest resistance, and use of crop fertilizers, insecticides, and pesticides.

Unlike most alfalfa producers, though, he doesn't care which variety yields the most. It's his job to remain unbiased.

Todd is senior research aide for the Penn State Alfalfa Variety Testing Program at the Russell E. Larson Agricultural Research Center at Rockspring and the Southeastern Field Research Lab at Landisville. For a \$300 entry fee, seed companies and breeders submit their choice of commercially available and advanced experimental varieties for yield testing. The fee covers the cost of testing for a four-year period.

Each year, Todd records the data on each variety and compiles this information in the "Forage Trials

Report," a publication available free at most cooperative extension offices, at the Farm Show, and possibly online by the end of the year.

"We are an unbiased testing source," Todd said. "The testing is open to any company, and we don't recommend any particular variety."

We offer the information to back up our results, and let the alfalfa producers make their own decisions."  
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Senior Research Aide Dick Todd maneuvers his custom-designed harvesting machine through orchardgrass trial plots at the Agronomy Research Farm near Rockspring.

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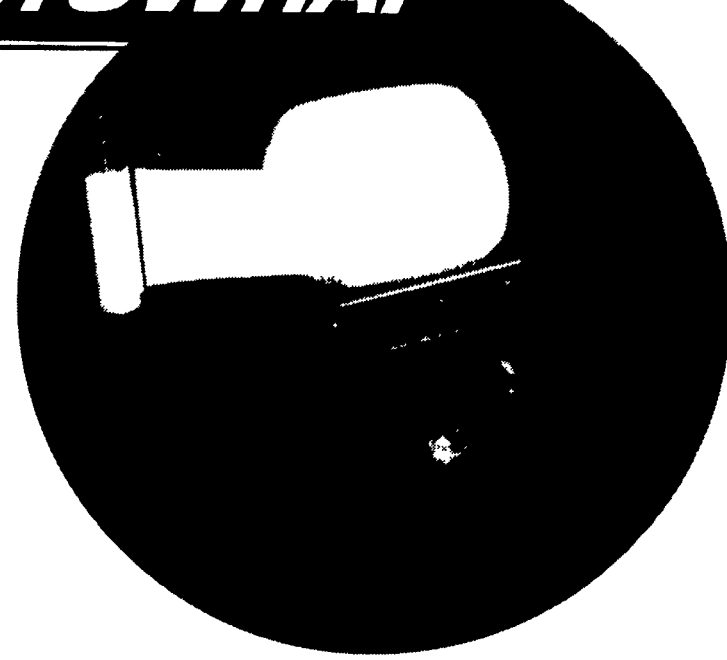
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