

## His Farm 'Came Alive' With Extended Rest

**MICHELLE KUNJAPPU**  
*Lancaster Farming Staff*

Art Thicke, Enchanted Meadows Farm, LaCrescent, Minnesota, believes in rest.

A speaker at the Southeast Pennsylvania Grazing Conference in February, he presented his experience — and success — with extended rest in pasture management.

Thicke manages pasture which includes 500-foot rolling hills well suited for grazing. A shallow silt loam with a limestone base serves as the basis for his pasture.

Thicke, his wife, and nephew milk 85-90 Ayrshires. The cattle have adapted well to the hills and have proven themselves in efficiency and longevity, said Thicke. The family has used the managed grazing system for 17 years. The farm is comprised of 90 acres.

Extended rest is key in his grazing program. "When I did that, my farm just came alive," he said.

"This system works better on my farm. That's not to say it's going to work on your farm," he said, encouraging producers to decide for themselves which forages and rotation times work best for their own farms.

"You have to find what's right for you."

Much of the farm is 15-20

percent slopes, which lends itself to grazing. Thicke has 40 pastures and begins grazing early for Minnesota — April 15-20. At that time he gives each pasture a 20-day rest.

While the springtime means a 20-day rest, by June the rest is extended to 40 days, followed by a 60-day rest in the fall. He usually gets a 220-day grazing season.

The extended rest is made possible because of the type of diverse forages grown in his pastures. Thicke examined the best forages on his land and noticed that they needed extended rest. "I used to do eight to nine rotations and now I do four to five rotations," he said.

The idea of rest is only reasonable, according to Thicke. "If we were raising grasses for hay, we'd never cut it five or six times, so why would be harvest it more with cows?"

"I try to push the envelope on the time of rest," he said. "The longer they're out there, the more they deposit manure and the more they get good vegetative feed."

As the grasses decrease in cooler weather, Thicke adds feed and hay and "keeps grazing as long as possible," he said. December is usually an ending point for the graz-

ing season.

The farm has almost two miles of lanes, made from six to eight inches of limestone, "one of the most important investments," he said. Blue 55-gallon barrels and floats serve as water sources for the pastures.

Benefits include a diverse offering of forages for the cows, herd comfort in the longer grasses, and less food purchased because of the increased tonnage. The cows do not have a problem eating the longer grass, said Thicke, "But then, they've never been off of the farm, so they don't know anything else," he said. Additionally he supplements the lactating cows' diet with 10-12 pounds of grain and the dry cows with four pounds.

From the health standpoint, having too-lush grass, which may be characteristic of shorter pastures, may lead to food rot, said Thicke. "It's too good of feed," he said. "A nutritionist wouldn't recommend that kind of concentration." Thicke has noticed that his cows do not crave hay as they used to, and he

does not have any more problems with bloat.

Maintaining pastures with proper management is important to Thicke. In 1976 was the last time he fertilized a pasture and has not reseeded 20-25 years. "I figure, every time I plow my pasture I'm going back," he said.

Another benefit is the increase of wildlife and birds on the farm with the longer grasses. Also the biological activity of the soils and grasses can be maintained even during summer heat with the bigger canopy.

As for pasture health, he clips all pastures once a year. "If you want to have life in your soil you have to feed it," he said. Waiting until the burdock and thistle are just coming into head will help in weed control.

Clipping also allows all plants to have equal footing, so the shorter plants are not continually overshadowed by other faster- or taller- growing plants.

Beside extended rest, other key elements include using bulls from his own cows and

wintering cattle on the farm's pastures.

After he noticed that the calves from his clean-up bulls, animals from his farm, were superior to the AI calves, Thicke began to save three to four bulls a year from this best cows.

In breed selection, he does not look for extremes, which has led to uniformity in his herd. but does put emphasis on a good disposition and a shallow udder, important for a grazing animal.

Working up the soils is not necessarily bad for the pasture. "Don't be afraid of rain," he said. If the animals are only in the area for one day and the area gets enough rest, a mud-riddled area can come back even stronger than before as the plants put down strong root systems.

One example of the animals working up the land to the benefit of the pasture is Thicke's wintering system.

Wintering his animals outside has proven to be not only economical but also healthy for the animals.

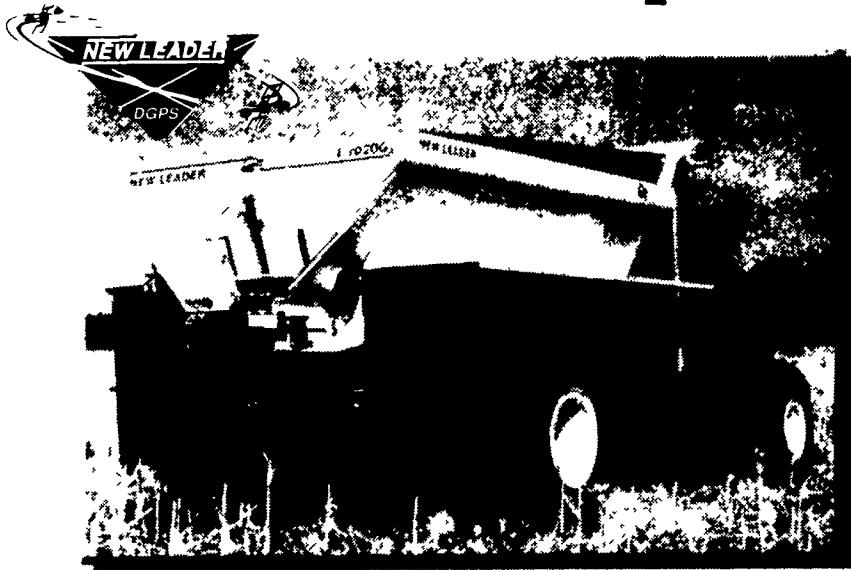
Around the end of Novem-

(Turn to Page 23)



**NEW LEADER**

## G4 SERIES Fertilizer and Lime Spreaders



The New Leader G4 Series Spreader can spread more acres per day-- with a wider range of material application rates--than any other granular applicator currently on the market. The new L3020G4 variable rate broadcaster allows you to

- ▶ Spread lime with effective swath widths up to 60'.
- ▶ Spread fertilizer with effective swath widths up to 90'.

The New Leader L2020G4 is also available.

For more information contact:

**ANNVILLE EQUIPMENT CO.**

470 Palmyra-Bellegrave Road Annaville, PA 17003

717/867-4631 or 800/233-0520

Email: aeci@paonline.com

website: annvilleequipmentcompany.com

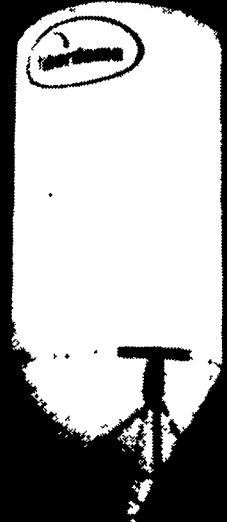
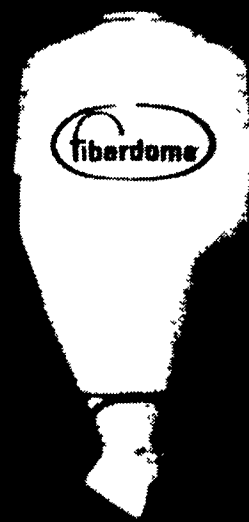
Building the best since 1939.



Why settle for 2nd best - when Fiberdome now manufactures the most advanced fiberglass bulk bin available!

- Eliminates budding, won't rust or corrode
- Cuts heat buildup and condensation
- Feed stays fresh in any weather
- Precision engineered for long, long life
- Unique 5-year warranty
- Adaptable to any auger or feeding system

Capacities from 1.5 ton to 3.1 ton  
(Tonnage based upon 10 lbs density for material bins available)



(2' - 10' Ton)

(11' - 30' Ton)

Write for a full color brochure and a free sample of the only...  
The modern material used for high-performance bins.

...made to last

Contact your nearest dealer.

**SOMERSET BARN EQUIPMENT**

Somerset, PA  
814-445-5555

**SOLLENBERGER SILO**

Chambersburg, PA  
717-264-9588

**CEDAR CREST EQUIP.**

Lebanon, PA  
717-270-6600



PO Box 11 • Lake Mills, WI 53551

**McMILLEN BROTHERS**

Loysville, PA  
717-789-3961