

Producers Getting A Handle On Cattle

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fed steers.

Producers also toured the Outdoor Farm Show in Ontario, Canada, on September 10, 2002, where they met with four cattle handling equipment manufacturers and observed demonstrations of those handling systems. Six farmers participated in this tour.

As the producers began to compile materials needed for making handling facilities, it became apparent that fence posts were an item that the group could purchase together to reduce the individual cost to each person. A tractor trailer-load of posts was ordered for seven different producers at a substantial savings to the group. A paid laborer was also hired to help construct facilities.

Of the thirteen farms that participate in the Seneca County beef discussion group, seven were directly involved in improving their cattle handling systems. An additional fifteen farms requested written materials on cattle handling systems, designs, and layout. Two grant-purchased reference books were sent to those farms building a facility.

The Seneca County beef discussion group gave input into the original grant idea and remained active throughout the project with meetings, farm visits, and collaborative efforts among its members. Five producers gave an oral evaluation to the larger Seneca

County group regarding the impact of this project on their farms.

The discussion group concept worked very well because producers were centrally located in an area that allowed convenient local meetings. Producers recommended cost-sharing of materials in future projects and would like to see other related components developed, such as fencing and water.

Walt Prouty, Seneca County producer, said, "The meetings helped me very much in developing my system and my veterinarian likes working here much more now." Other comments related to the value of learning from other farmers and garnering the shared knowledge of the group.

As a result of the cattle handling systems project, eight farms have made improvements to their cattle handling systems, ranging from equipment modifications to improve cattle flow to building a brand-new facility from scratch. Five additional farms are in the planning phase and will build or renovate their systems this coming spring. A spring beef tour is planned to tour the participating sites and to talk with producers about the improvements they made. There is considerable ongoing interest by farmers in cattle handling facilities.

Wright was very pleased with the results of this project and would like to continue her efforts on an even larger scale.

"I believe this project was very successful in achieving the desired outcomes, and this project could serve as a model for efforts across the state. The key to success is the discussion group format for meetings, where producers encourage each other in moving forward on making plans and setting up work days."

As she moves forward, Wright has identified what has worked and what needs to be improved for the future success of her work. "The challenges of this project include the time limitations that farmers face in making desired improvements and the financial outlay for materials."

Wright plans to continue consulting with those producers who are in the process of building cattle handling facilities. She has been compiling resources on cattle handling and will continue to act as a resource person for anyone interested in this topic. In the future, Wright plans to apply for additional grants to expand this collaborative working model across the state.

For more information on affordable cattle-handling systems, contact Martha Wright at NWN CCE Dairy, Livestock, and Field Crops Team, (585) 394-3977 ext.36, or email maw32@cornell.edu. For more information on the CCE Grants Program for Innovative Small Farm Education, or for general small farms information, visit www.smallfarms.cornell.edu.

50 Cows, 50 Years Of Success

Massachusetts Grazer Focuses On 'Quality Of Life'

Dan Demaine
Cornell Coop. Extension
Cortland County

January 13-18 was an exciting week for New York dairy farmers who use pasture. A series of dairy grazing conferences were conducted across the state. The conferences were made possible through funding provided by the Cornell Small Farms Program, the New York Pasture Association, and the New York Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative. They took place in six different locations so that nearly every New York farmer was within an hour and a half of one of the meetings.

The conferences featured two well-respected farmers as keynote speakers, David Surprenant from Illinois and Larry Shearer from Massachusetts. Both were enthusiastically received by the audience for their practical knowledge and willingness to share their own experiences. In addition, each of the meetings included other presentations that were of specific interest to farmers in the local area. In this article, I'll discuss Larry's presentation.

Larry has been recognized as an outstanding farmer by

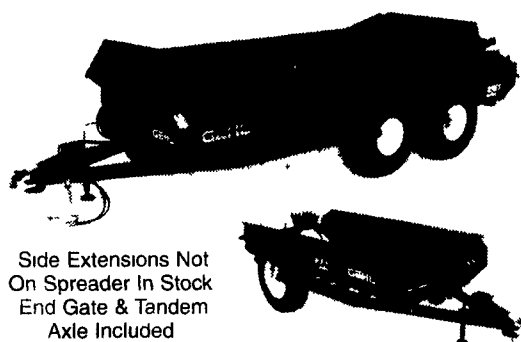
the Northeast Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education Program, and serves as a "Farmer-Educators" for NE-SARE. His presentation detailed his long experience in the dairy industry and the changes he has made to his business through the years to meet his family's goals.

Larry's father bought the family farm in 1929, the year Larry was born. At that time it included both an apple orchard and a small dairy herd. Larry studied horticulture at the University of Massachusetts and expected to take over the apples, but, instead, his father turned over management of the dairy to him after he graduated.

After managing the dairy operation as an employee of his father for more than 10 years, Larry told his father that he wanted to either buy the family farm or move to another farm. At the time, he was married and had three children and was ready to be on his own. His father sold him the farm for \$30,000, which was half the assessed value, and Larry set about changing the farm to suit his needs.

(Turn to Page E26)

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Heaped, double beater ..	215 (6 10)	260 (7 36)	340 (9 60)
Struck level ..	104 (2 95)	125 (3 54)	162 (4 60)
Struck level, liquid slides ..	125 (3 54)	150 (4 25)	204 (5 79)
Bushels ..	177	217	287
Dimensions			
Inside width of bed, in (m) ..	60.9 (1 55)	60.9 (1 55)	60.9 (1 55)
Overall width ..	92.5 (2 35)*	92.5 (2 35)*	97 (2 46)*
Inside bed depth, top of flare ..	22.6 (0 58)	22.6 (0 58)	22.6 (0 58)
Inside bed length ...	128.3 (3 26)	154.3 (3 92)	192 (4 48)
Overall length ..	196.4 (4 99)	224.4 (5 70)	268.1 (6 81)
Loading height ..	47.8 (1 21)	47.8 (1 21)	46.8 (1 19)
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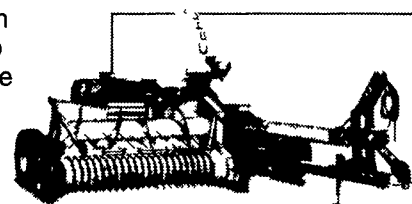
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