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and a paralyzed vocal cord. I am doing a physical and speech therapy to improve both of these losses and I am pleased to report that my balance control has improved substantially. However, my vocal cord has a long way to go, but I'm getting there.

Now, to report on Project Grass's Grassland Evaluation Contest. The Cambria County team was the first place winner and represented Pennsylvania at the Mid-America Contest in Missouri. I am so pleased to report that the team placed eighth overall out of 19 teams from all over the country. Of the nine 4-H teams competing, they placed second. This is a fantastic showing for Pennsylvania's first year. I would like to say thank you to all the team members for their hard work in preparing for the contest and congratulations for a job well done. I would also like to say thank you to those conservation professionals responsible for Pennsylvania's contest (particularly NRCS conservationist Bobbi Bailey and our NRCS Project Grass coordinators) and those who helped the teams prepare for competition. They are helping to prepare Pennsylvan-

nia's future graziers.

The sunshine was so wonderful on the day of this writing. It makes all those days of rain and no sunshine seem far away. But we know they are not. I have spoken to a few folks who were complaining about the weather because they did not know how they were going to get baleage made, let alone hay. I also talked to some people who were not complaining about the rain because they remembered last year's drought. These folks were basically graziers. They were not relying on the sun to dry or wilt forages. They were using their "four-legged" mowing machines to harvest their forages. That's right, their livestock were able to consume the wet forage even in the rain.

When you think about it, there are several reasons that grazing has advantages over mechanical harvesting and feeding stored forages. Several are very obvious but I will list them anyway. I already listed the first reason which is that regardless of the weather, livestock can harvest the forages. The second reason is a matter of economics. We make more money on livestock products because we have lowered our feed costs, thereby increasing the

bottomline. The third reason is lower machinery needs because of less planting or harvesting and the associated costs. The fourth reason is that livestock help to spread their own manure which reduces hauling and storage costs as well as provides environmental benefits. The fifth reason is a better personal and family life with less stress and more enjoyment.

Let's first discuss the weather concern and the fact the forage harvest is not overly affected by it. Livestock will not destroy a pasture that is soaked and soggy because of a lot of rain if they are only allowed to have a very short grazing period. You give them a small plot that will meet their nutritional needs for just a few hours. A pasture is generally ruined if animals are allowed to camp in field for a longer period of time. They can also find stockpiled forage under the snow. When the hay fields only grow six inches or so because of the lack of rain, it is almost impossible to mechanically harvest, but livestock can easily graze. Therefore, it is important to install the perimeter fence around the farm so all the fields may be grazed. This is especially true in dry periods as long as you consider heat stress. Ideal weather affords the best grazing time and also benefits crop growing. We must consider how much ideal weather we do enjoy and remember that if we do not have it, the livestock will harvest the forages anyway through grazing.

The second reason we listed was increasing the bottom line. You can imagine that through the live-

stocks' grazing and keeping the tractor parked that feed costs are reduced. When we put fewer acres under annual crop production, we are saving money. The forage crop is planted for many years of harvest and the cost of establishment is spread out over several years. Excess forages are harvested for winter-feed. Grazing reduces veterinarian costs and utility costs. In general grazing reduces input costs thereby increasing profits.

Grazing improves the lifestyle of the producer. This is a very intangible factor but is very important. The reduction of stress can

improve the grazer's family and personal daily life. He/she gets more time to enjoy the family and to do off-the-farm activities. By reducing overall stress, there is a tendency for younger family members to remain on the farm.

If you would like information on grazing you can contact me by e-mail at HYPERLINKmailto:duane.pysher@pa.usda.gov or telephone me at (717) 237-2221 or write to me at home at 320 N. Walnut St., Wernersville, PA 19565.

Until next time, happy grazing.

Bale Wrapper Technology In Use On Plain Dairy

ELIZABETHTOWN (Lancaster Co.) — Plain dairy farmers have been making use of special bale wrapper technology that aids in the fermentation process for silage.

An Amish farmer from Honey Brook spoke about his operation during a special Lancaster County pasture walk at the Garber Dairy Farm in Elizabethtown in May.

The Honey Brook farmer manages about 70 acres, all Holsteins. He uses a sicklebar mower.

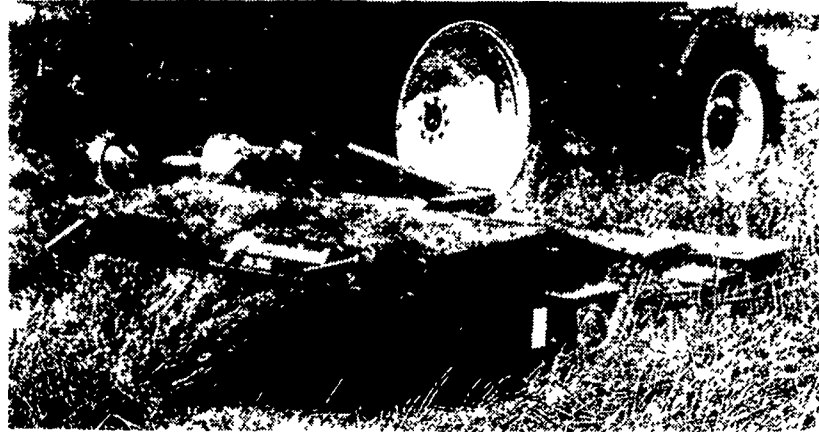
Using a regular baler, about 16 bales are compressed and wrapped. A cylinder press compresses them and a device wraps them in thick plastic.

"The cows have been eating (the baleage). It feeds nice," he said.

The bales are compressed and wrapped when they are fairly dry. They cannot be wrapped too wet, noted the dairyman.

The Amish farmer is a member of DFA. He cares for about 40 milk cows and is not on DHIA.

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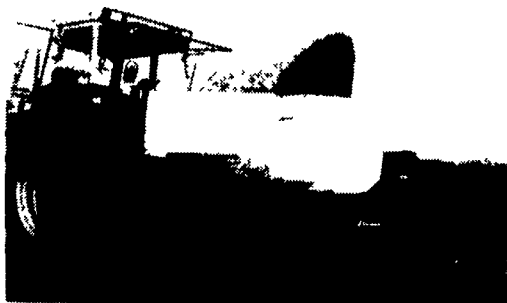
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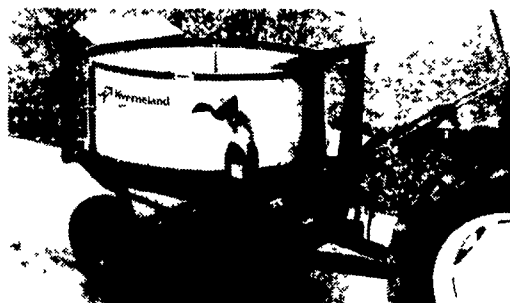
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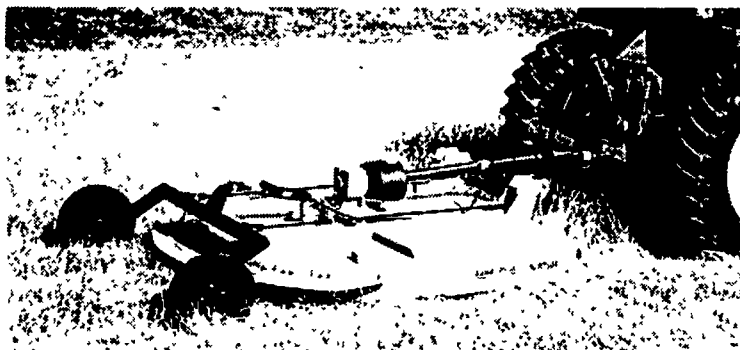
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