

Web-Based Forage Species Selector On The Way

UNIVERSITY PARK (Centre Co.) — Dr. Marvin H. Hall, professor of forage management in the College of Agricultural Sciences, and Dr. Douglas A. Miller, director for outreach with the Earth and Mineral Sciences Environmental Institute, are developing a Web-based forage species selector. The result will be a Web-based, geographic information systems (GIS) map program that farmers can use to find out what kind of forage will grow well in their area. The Website is http://www.forages.psu.edu/selection_tool/index.html.

Hall and Miller have expended on a Cornell University Web-based interface that allows users to provide a soil type or zip code and their own management factors to find the right forage to grow in their area. In collaboration with Dr. Jerry Cherney of Cornell, Hall and Miller have developed a prototype Web-based forage species selection

tool that enables agronomic professionals, including Penn State Cooperative Extension agents, farmers, and consultants, to select the optimal forage species for a specific land area.

The Penn State forage selector provides a map location linked to underlying soil series information (series identification, drainage, and slope classes). The program then poses a series of management questions to the user. The decision-support component of the computer program offers recommendations to the user in the form of tabular and narrative summaries.

"Planting a forage crop that is not adapted to the soil type in a field can cause reduced yields or stand failure," Hall said. "This program will assist farmers via the World Wide Web, in selecting the most suitable forage crop for a particular field on their farm. Ultimately, this should improve forage yield, which can improve farm profit."

Miller explained that Web mapping is "an emerging paradigm that combines the power of geographic information systems (GIS) with information architecture to produce easily usable map interfaces that are designed to answer specific questions related to the spatial nature of the land surface. These map interfaces assume minimal

technical knowledge of GIS on the part of the user.

"In the future, we envision augmenting the forage species selector (and potentially other agricultural sciences projects) with earth and mineral sciences expertise in meteorology and climatology," Miller added. "We envision being able to provide near real-time information on weather and climate

for topic areas such as drought planning, integrated pest management, and crop production — basically any type of agriculturally related problem where we can combine Web mapping and weather/climate information to provide up-to-the-minute information for Pennsylvania's agriculture industry."

Resources Available For Forage Storage Information

GREEN BAY, Wis. — The Crop Storage Institute (CSI) has many resources for those looking for information on forage storage. The information comes in the form of CD-ROM's, Excel Spreadsheets, printed literature, Internet sites, and personal presentations, and visits.

The CD-ROM titled "Crop Storage Systems" contains comprehensive information regarding forage storage for livestock production. While all of the information on the CD-ROM is available from other sources, it is often scattered and hard to understand. This project, which spent nearly two years in production, compiles all of the available information into one easy to use resource.

The software package

can be extremely helpful to anyone in the livestock industry from extension agents and agricultural educators to producers. Its primary use is in comparing the tower, horizontal, and bag methods of storage. It contains slide show programs, spreadsheets, and encyclopedia style information.

The spreadsheets contained on the CD can be obtained through e-mail or a 3.5-inch floppy disk. There are several spreadsheets available, including a bunker density calculator, a long-term cost comparison, and others.

There are several pieces of printed literature available. They range in subject from university studies on silage bags, cost comparisons, bunker information, and informa-

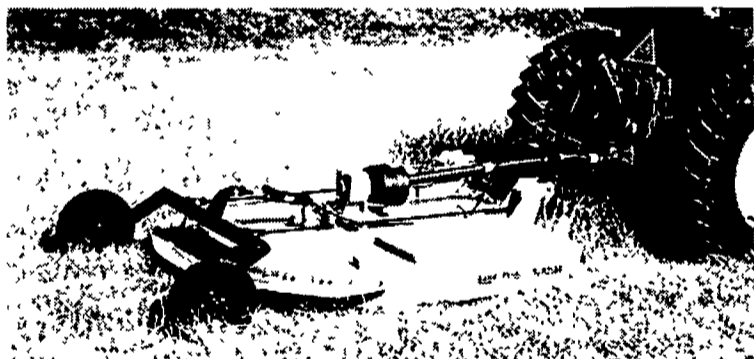
tion on the capabilities of upright silos. This information can supplement a presentation on nearly any topic involving forage storage.

The Crop Storage Institute, created in 1994, takes the information coming from universities and packages it in easy to understand format. According to the CSI, this is necessary because it often takes too long for helpful information to come from universities and be made into common practice.

All of the information is available free of charge and can be attained through several methods: by phone at (920) 265-6235, through the mail at P.O. Box 8264, Green Bay, WI 54308, e-mail at CropStorage@cs.com, or on the Internet at www.CropStorage.com.

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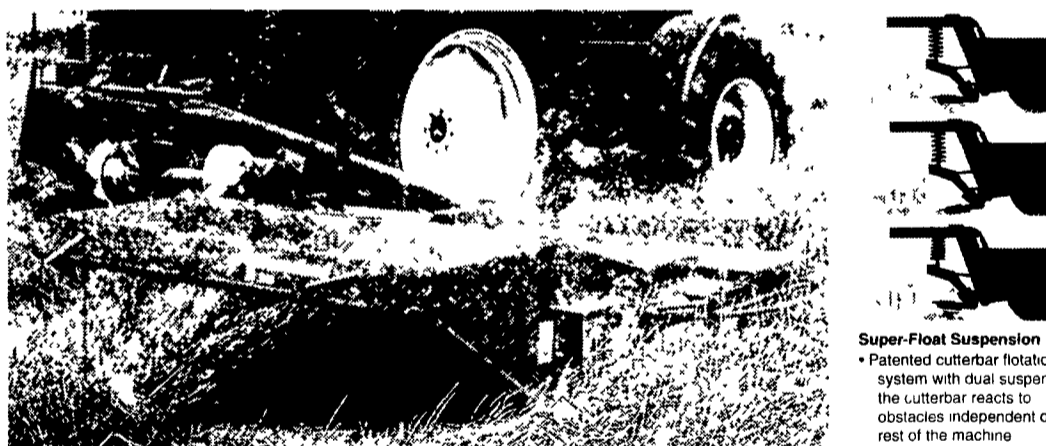
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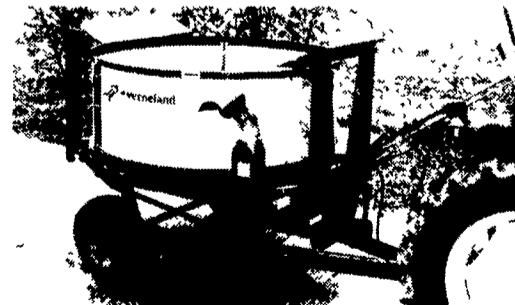
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