

COST IS TOO HIGH FOR MOST

Soil Limitations, State Rules Expected To Cap Industry Here

BY SUSAN USHER

As local farmers look for new ways to diversify their income, more swine operations are likely to crop up in Brunswick County.

However, a local agricultural agent doesn't think Brunswick County will ever have enough hog farms to create problems.

"Corn, soybeans are not good now. Tobacco's the money crop," said Harold Jones, district conservationist with the U.S. Soil Conservation Service. "Hogs are another way to diversify, to keep from losing your pants farming."

But raising swine is a gamble like any other kind of farming, he says, with its high front-end costs plus inherent risks of disease.

"Folks are having to spend \$1 million to \$1.5 million to put in a hog operation. You take 20,000 hogs and you lose \$1 a hog, that's \$20,000 you've lost."

"It's a business, a big business."

Pork is a \$900 million industry in North Carolina, the nation's fourth largest producer. The state's Pork Producers Association estimates there are about 8,000 hog farms across North Carolina.

Brunswick County Agricultural Extension Director Milton Coleman said he is not sure how many Brunswick County farms have hogs today, but in 1989 he tested hogs for pseudo rabies on 252 farms, of which about 110 had a "sizeable number."

Presently the largest numbers in terms of brood sows and litter production runs around 3,600, up from 2,900 in 1988 at Wilbur and Mary Earp's Funston Farms.

"We're not like some other counties," said Coleman.

All existing large livestock operations with on-site wastewater disposal had to register by Dec. 31 with the N.C. Division of Environmental Management (DEM). An operation is considered large if it has 100 cat-

"We've probably talked more people out of it than anything else."

—Harold Jones District Conservationist

tle, 75 horses, 250 hogs or 1,000 sheep, or in the case of poultry farms, 30,000 or more birds and a liquid waste system rather than the more common dry litter.

As of Dec. 29, 2,100 farms had registered, with 1,200 entered so far on a computer database. Of those, only four, all swine operations, are located in Brunswick County.

"There could be more," said Rick Shiver of the Wilmington Regional DEM office. "They expect to have the rest of the registrations on the computer by the end of February."

In addition, after Jan. 1, new or expanding farms must file waste management plans. Established

farms have three years, until 1997, to file their plans. Their plans must comply with new rules governing waste sprayed on fields and siting and construction of waste settling lagoons. The land set aside for spray irrigation must be sufficient to handle the entire volume of waste generated by the livestock operation.

By Jones's estimation, there's little chance Brunswick County will ever have as high a concentration of swine operations as some other southeastern North Carolina counties, even with the opening of a processing facility in nearby Bladen County.

Of the first nine requests his office received in 1993 to check potential sites, only two farmers had suitable land.

"We have spent a half day digging holes trying to find a suitable site," said Jones.

With its high water table and predominantly sandy soils, Jones said he doesn't see swine production mushrooming here.

"I anticipate the number (of hog operations) will increase, but their location, I don't know," he said. "I don't see it becoming a problem as it has in some other counties, mainly because of the soil situation."

"We have folks who have backed off. We've probably talked more people out of it than anything else," said Jones.

Land plays a tremendous role in the feasibility of a hog operation. A farm has to have enough land for on-site treatment of all wastewater generated by the operation, while maintaining required distances from any body of water, and from houses and other structures.

Generally the treatment system consists of one or more settling/storage lagoons and fields for spray irrigation. How much land is required and the type(s) of crops to be grown

it depends on the soil type and absorption rates.

If the soil is unsuitable for a waste lagoon, then it must be sealed with a clay or plastic liner. For most, said Jones, "that generally makes the cost prohibitive."

The lagoon must be big enough to store the waste plus the maximum 24-hour rainfall that could occur in this area, about 8 inches.

For anyone who does venture into the business, guidance through the maze of regulations is available, and in most cases, required.

"If you are well-heeled financially you can go out on your own without the advice or help of the Agricultural Soil and Conservation Service or Agriculture Extension," said Jones. "But in the financial community, if a farmer needs a loan, most institutions require use of ASCS."

Jones has to sign off on the plans. And before doing so he makes sure the farmer will be in compliance.

"Very few people realize how specific we are," he said.

Two major concerns are fecal coliform and nitrogen, because they leach easily into water. When that leachate reaches the coast, areas are closed to shellfishing.

While environmental organizations across the state had pushed for even stronger regulations, James Cummings, Best Management Practices program coordinator for the N.C. Soil and Water Conservation Service, says that "if managed properly, the new systems should reduce almost all the concerns regarding groundwater."

However, he said there still will be "some odor," particular at certain times.

Most lagoons are designed to be pumped out every 180 days or so. In the fall the effluent is usually sprayed as fertilizer for winter wheat, and in spring, coastal Bermuda grass, because it absorbs nitro-

gen at such a high rate.

Typically there is little obvious odor noticeable around a properly functioning system, and most lagoons are "over-designed" to handle more than their anticipated maximum load.

However, Jones said that if a lagoon has been designed to serve a certain size of operation and the farmer expands his operation without upgrading the lagoon, it can cause problems.

Odor can also be more noticeable in two other situations: when effluent is being sprayed on the fields under certain environmental conditions, and at the onset of warm weather, when anaerobic action may increase in the lagoon and bubbles break to the surface of the rusty-brown liquid that signals a working system.

Most hog growers work with one of the 15 or 17 "integrators" in business in southeastern North Carolina. At least five, maybe more, have contracts with local farms.

An integrator such as Prestage Farms, Carroll Foods, Murphy's, Brown's of Carolina, Moore's or Purina shares some of the risk of the contract farmer and provides consultation and services such as automated record-keeping. The integrator also offer incentives for efficiency, and may cancel contracts if its operating standards aren't maintained.

Some integrators are more restrictive than the state, said Jones, requiring 2,000 yards distances from churches, for example, instead of a 750-yard minimum.

Coleman said three general types of contracts are available: raising a sow herd to weaning size, about 40 to 50 pounds; grow-out with a feeding floor, from weaning to market-size; and nursery, birth to three weeks old.

Some farmers operate more traditionally and "do it all."

OPPONENTS: THERE GOES THE NEIGHBORHOOD?

Diversity Said Key To Keeping Family Farm

One local farmer looking to diversify his operation through swine production met "there's goes the neighborhood" resistance within his Grissetown community last year.

Some of Malcolm Grissett's neighbors and kinsmen were convinced that any hog operation automatically meant problems with unpleasant odors and groundwater contamination.

In July, a cousin, Oneal Grissett, who also farms in the Grissetown area, presented a petition on behalf of fellow signers asking Brunswick County Commissioners to adopt local hog parlor regulations more stringent than those of the state and the U.S. Soil Conservation Service, similar to those adopted by most other counties in the state.

Otherwise, he wrote, "This could become a green light for the large hog conglomerates. As I write, plans have been laid to make the residents of the Grissetown Community neighbors to one of these facilities."

Commissioners took no action on the petition. Meanwhile, Malcolm Grissett says he's just trying

to hold on to the family farm, with no intentions of hurting the quality of life in the community where he and his family live.

"We've had a family farm here since the early 1900s, four generations," he said. "We try to do a good job with what we do. We've had to work off the farm because it wouldn't support us."

While he has farmed part-time while working full-time for Atlantic Telephone Membership Corp. as outside plant manager, Grissett has a son, James, whose "heart and desire is to farm."

A farrow-to-weaning swine operation could help provide the income to make that possible.

Grissett is convinced that current technology means it can be done without harm to the environment and without being a nuisance to the neighborhood, and that fears to the contrary are unwarranted.

"I simply don't think people are acquainted with the new technology," he said. "I think fear comes to people by not knowing."

"I'm just a farmer trying to live by the rules. The question for me is 'What is really fair for Malcolm Grissett?' If I don't make changes will our family farm service another generation?"

"Brunswick County farmers work hard at what they do and do a good job. I want to protect that heritage and pass it on."



GRISSETT

Southport Man Killed When He Steps Into Path Of Car

A Southport pedestrian was killed last Tuesday evening, Dec. 28, at approximately 7:25 p.m. when struck by a car as he was crossing Long Beach Road.

Curtis Thomas Long, 66, was standing in the turn lane and then stepped into the path of a northbound 1989 Mercury, the car's driver, Kier Skipper, 27, told N.C. Highway Patrolman J.V. Dove.

No charges were filed. Both Skipper and his passenger, Anh-Dao Lang, 22, both of Long Beach, complained of injuries.

Damages to the Mercury were estimated at \$600.

Two drivers were charged in separate accidents on New Year's Day,

Jan. 1. Anthony Scott, Rabon, 18, of Winnabow, was charged with driving while impaired following a one-car wreck that occurred at approximately 11 a.m. six miles south of Leland on Town Creek Road (S.R. 1413).

Rabon was taken to New Hanover Regional Medical Center in Wilmington for treatment of serious, non-incapacitating injuries.

Trooper D.A. Lewis reported Rabon was driving east in a 1988 Ford pickup at a high rate of speed when he lost control of the vehicle. The truck ran off the left shoulder of the road, back onto the roadway, off the right shoulder and back onto the road and started skidding sideways.

The truck continued off the left shoulder and struck first a telephone junction box, then a ditch bank, overturned and came to rest upside down on the shoulder. Rabon was thrown from the vehicle, coming to rest in the eastbound lane of traffic. Damage to the truck was estimated at \$4,000.

No serious injuries were reported following a three-car wreck that happened at 9:20 p.m. two miles east of Shallotte on N.C. 130.

Christy Moore, 25, of Shallotte was traveling east on N.C. 130 when she stopped her 1986 Oldsmobile to make a left-hand turn into a private driveway. Dannielle Bettinger, 23, of Sup-

ply, was also eastbound and came to a stop in her 1985 Chevrolet behind Moore.

Donald White, 18, of Supply, driving a 1988 Ford, wasn't able to stop, and his Ford struck Bettinger's car, which in turn struck Moore's car.

White was charged by Trooper W.H. Thompson with failure to reduce speed.

Brent Moore, 27, of Shallotte, a passenger in Moore's car, Bettinger and White reported complaints of injury but were not transported for treatment.

Damages were estimated at \$2,800 to White's Ford, \$2,000 to Bettinger's Chevrolet and \$100 to Moore's Oldsmobile.

Leland Man Killed, Wife Hurt In New Year's Fire

A 46-year-old Leland woman remained in serious condition Tuesday at a Chapel Hill hospital where she is being treated for inhalation burns suffered in the New Year's Day fire that killed her husband, a sheriff's detective said.

Hazel Southerland told investigators that she tried to drag her husband George, 67, out of their smoke-filled house on McKoy Trail after he was overcome by fumes and collapsed early Saturday morning.

"He told his wife he was too big to pull out of the house and told her to leave him and get out," Brunswick County Sheriff's Deputy Mark Snowden reported after speaking with her following the incident. "Mr. Southerland stayed in the fire and perished."

Mrs. Southerland told Snowden

that her husband got up at around 6 a.m. "to stoke the fire," then went back to bed. About a half hour later she said they awoke to find the room full of smoke.

Southerland reportedly stood up and immediately fell down choking, the report said. His body was found lying in the bed, Sheriff's Detective Gene Caison said.

Investigators believe that when Southerland got up to stoke the fire, he may have knocked sparks or a burning ember onto the floor. It apparently smoldered long enough to ignite the blaze that destroyed their small wood frame house in the Phoenix community, where he occasionally preached at the nearby Summerville AME Zion Church.

The house was "fully involved" in

flames when Snowden arrived minutes after the 911 call came in at 6:41. Firefighters from Leland, Northwest, Navassa and Winnabow responded and contained the blaze,

but were unable to save the house.

Caison said the house was constructed of old "fat lighter" lumber, which burns quickly and is difficult to extinguish when it catches fire.

Coast Guard Assists One Of Her Own In Quiet Holiday Season

The U.S. Coast Guard Station at Oak Island enjoyed a largely uneventful holiday season, with only one rescue effort launched since Christmas, station chief BMCS J.D. Arndt reported Tuesday.

Sunday afternoon at about 5 p.m., the station received a call from the sailing vessel "Julie Ann," reporting itself disabled in the vicinity of

Frying Pan Shoals Buoy 4, Arndt said.

The boat identified itself as a U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary vessel, authorizing it to receive Coast Guard assistance at any time, the chief said.

The station launched its 41-foot patrol boat, which located the "Julie Ann" and towed it to the nearest safe mooring, at Southport Marina.

We Salute The Shallotte Moose Lodge
We're proud to have provided paving services for your driveway.

MAC CONSTRUCTION COMPANY
SHALLOTTE, N.C.

Helping Brunswick County Grow!
Grading And Paving Contractor
754-7177

Asphalt Plant—2 miles north of Shallotte on Hwy. 17

Power Lunch
When Taste Matters

Make your best deal of the day. Have Colombo Frozen Yogurt for lunch. It's high in protein and has the rich creamy taste of premium ice cream with 1/2 fewer calories.

2 for 1
Bring this to store listed. Buy a large serving of Colombo Frozen Yogurt and get a second of equal or lesser value Free.

Good at Shallotte and Southport Express Stops
Limit 1 per customer. Not redeemable for cash. Not valid with any other promotion.

Express Stop
24 Hours A Day—7 Days • Shallotte-Jct. Hwy. 17 & Holden Bch Rd.

Auto Accidents Disability Job Injuries
ARE YOU A HARD WORKER NOW INJURED OR DISABLED?
CALL: 1-800-336-0155
Kathleen Shannon Glancy
Attorney at Law
114 S. Front St., Wilmington, NC
LET ME WORK HARD FOR YOU TO OBTAIN FAIR AND REASONABLE COMPENSATION FOR YOUR INJURIES

PUBLIC NOTICE

Pursuant to the provisions of N.C.G.S. 160A-269, an offer to purchase Lot 584 and Lot 585, Section 9, Plat 7/38, Boiling Spring Lakes has been upset. The upset bid is in the amount of \$1,420.30. Within ten days from the date hereof any person may raise the bid by not less than ten percent of the first one thousand dollars and five percent of the remainder. Any upset bid must be deposited with the Clerk to the Board of Commissioners. The Board of Commissioners may at any time reject any and all bids.

This the 6th day of January, 1994,
Brunswick County Board of Commissioners
Joyce C. Johnson, Interim Clerk to the Board

WAREHOUSE FURNITURE
Distributors

Check Out Our Everyday Low Prices!

SAVE 20% TO 60% OFF
List Everyday

Pre-Inventory Yellow Tag Sale!!
Huge Savings Storewide

Warehouse Furniture
Distributors
Hwy. 90 Nixon's Crossroads
(803) 249-8874

DELIVERY AVAILABLE
IN-STORE FINANCING
SPECIAL ORDERS
INSTANT CREDIT
WINTER HOURS
Mon.-Sat. 8:30-5 PM
90 DAYS SAME AS CASH