

Modern Methods Gives Cows "Curb Service"

"Curb service for cattle" is something new under the sun. The term aptly fits a beef-feeding procedure adopted by the McNair Farms near Laurinburg. Instead of waiting a single pound of weight for food, the white face Herefords simply stand and eat and grow heavier.

During the cooler months of the year, the beef are herded onto a concrete feeding platform from which they need never stir. Water is piped along one side; along the other extends an ever-loaded feed trough. The pasture comes to them curb service style.

Pen feeding is facilitated on the McNair farms by the nearness of a modern dehydrating plant which mixes exactly the diet desired for the cattle. Roughage such as straw, corn cobs or even cotton bolls is pulverized and mixed with cottonseed meal, salt, vegetable fats, molasses, and dehydrated sericea lespedeza or Coastal Bermuda grass, which provides Vitamin A and other unidentified growth factors. The mixture is fed at exactly the desired rate. Thus the beef cannot choose the "dessert" and leave the spinach.

"Curb service for cattle" is a wintertime use for two dehydrators which operate during the grass-growing season to dehydrate sericea lespedeza and coastal Bermuda grass as a Vitamin A concentrate for mixed feeds of all kinds.

Good as Dehydrated Alfalfa E. Hervey Evans, Jr., youthful manager of the McNair farms says that independent experiments conducted by N. C. State College and by the farms in conjunction with the college both proved that coastal Bermuda and sericea lespedeza are "equal to or superior to" dehydrated alfalfa in Vitamin A content. Since the major portion of dehydrated alfalfa now comes from Kansas and other midwestern states, Evans decided to dehydrate a local product - and save the freight. Hundreds of acres have been seeded to sericea lespedeza and to the less common coastal Bermuda.

McNair farms use the concentrate to feed both beef and turkeys, raising upward of 200,000 turkeys per year for wholesale to meat processors.

During grass-growing months, hugh harvesters crawl across the rich pasture lands, cutting and blowing the grass into big Prairie Schooners. These convey the grass into dump trucks which haul and dump it into the dehydrator chutes. Heated to temperatures of 1,300 degrees, large revolving drums tumble the silage through the hot blast much as a clothes drier - and the grass emerges dry enough to be pulverized. The trip through the

drier requires less than three minutes. The pulverized silage then is steam-treated and pressed into pellets. Pelleted grass then is stored in huge silos awaiting shipment or regrinding for home feeding on McNair farms.

Pasture-Fresh Vitamins The hot drums exhaust a vapor of pleasing aroma, and at night, the oil-fired blasts cast a ruddy glow across the landscape. Pellets pour forth in a warm, steady stream - still bearing something of the odor of the pastures where they were cut only hours earlier.

Inert gas is forced into the silos to displace oxygen and preserve the pasture - fresh vitamin content of the pellets.

Superintendent Hubert McRae estimates the dehydrators process 50 tons of finished pellets per day - a considerable "industry" for agricultural Robeson and Scotland counties.

Manager Evans confirms that dehydrators are relatively uncommon in North Carolina and that concrete pen feeding perhaps is even rarer. These are but a few of many agricultural activities on the McNair Farms, for which the slogan "we practice diversified farming" is a real understatement.

The dehydrator, for instance, demonstrates its versatility both summer and winter. When frost calls a halt to capturing vitamins in grasses, the dehydrators turn from drying grass to two - old weather uses. One is that of mixing feed for use on the farms. The other is dehydrating manure.

"Whole" Beef Utilized The concrete feeding pen is located close to the dehydrators so that manure easily can be transferred to the dehydrators for processing and bagging. Dehydrated manure finds a ready market, particularly for fertilizing flower gardens. Just as slaughter houses are credited with saving all except the pig's squeal, so the McNair farms utilize the "whole" beef.

Manure is accumulated literally in "acre-feet" quantities and is held in reserve to keep the dehydrators operating during otherwise slack seasons. The feed mixing for home use likewise fills the slack gaps.

Hervey Evans, guiding genius of the McNair enterprises, explains the operation as "a part of our plan to utilize our land and our supervisory talent for maximum production." Evans, who is a director of Carolina Power & Light Company, points out that the farms apply a lot of that company's power for mechanizing farm operations and for a degree of automation, as in automatic watering for the thousands of turkeys.

Responding to the question of future utilization of the dehydrators, the Evanses regard the two-year-old operation as still in the experimental or test stage but hint the experiment eventually may extend beyond coastal Bermuda and sericea lespedeza.

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