



Agri·Mark®

monthly

Timely news for Agri-Mark's dairy farmer members

March 1996

Agri-Mark Treasurer Robert Jacquier and members Doug Carlson, Ben Freund, and Dave Jacquier all live in Canaan, Conn. They were recently featured in an article in their local paper, the *Litchfield County Times*, for the joint project they are working on to handle the manure from each of their dairy farms.

These members and three other dairy farmers have formed the Canaan Valley Agricultural Cooperative to better manage their manure. They received a \$240,000 grant from the Connecticut State Department of Agriculture to collaborate on manure storage and treatment. They soon hope to market bags of dried manure on both the retail and wholesale levels. These members farm along the Blackberry River, and hope their project will generate farm dollars and continue to maintain the local water quality.

Gardening center has the poop

By KEVIN CANFIELD
Register Citizen Staff

SHARON - Although Charlie Paley's idea of what is suitable for mail delivery might differ slightly from that of non-gardeners, his introduction of a unique new product to the area is sure to pique the interest of those who spend their time cultivating the land.

To inform the public of the newest addition to his store's retail lineup, Paley, owner of The Garden Center at Paley's Market in Sharon, has been sending free samples of his new product through the mail.

Although this is common promotional practice, the nature of the deliveries is thoroughly uncommon.

The product, a new 100 percent pure cow manure fertilizer known as M'Noor, is definitely not your

The product, a new 100-percent pure cow-manure fertilizer known as M'Noor, is definitely not your average greeting card.

average greeting card, but it does grab attention.

"M'Noor is a fresh, pure cow manure that comes from a Connecticut dairy farm. The original product is put through a processor to remove all water and is shredded to a fine consistency," said Paley, perhaps providing a little more detail than is necessary.

"Cow manure is a perfect fertilizer because it has the right balance of nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium. And unlike other packaged cow manure products that contain only about 20 percent

of the product, this is 100 percent real thing."

Paley will be launching M'Noor - promotionally speaking, that is - on Saturday when his market re-opens after being closed for the winter. Shovels, trowels and containers will be available to all of the brave customers wishing to package their own M'Noor.

According to Sue Berkman, Paley's advertising director, purchasers of M'Noor need only beware of one thing.

"Don't leave an open bag in a closed car."

The Lakeville Journal

EDITORIAL PAGE A12

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 9, 1995

Will Canaan Face Farm Realities?

Farmers deal with reality every day. In a world where image, cheap talk and fantasy often seem to rule, the farmer still copes with stubborn facts: snow, cold, heat, drought, balky cows, balky equipment, governmental regulation.

Dairy farmers, like those in Canaan, also deal with manure. Now Canaan's dairymen are asking their neighbors, specifically the town's Economic Development Commission, to help them find ways to deal with their manure — 45,000 tons of it each year.

Commissioners — indeed all Canaanites — will do well to pay attention. They too, after all, confront some realities.

- Farms remain an important factor in Canaan's economy. Beyond the families they support, these businesses earn, borrow and spend millions each year, purchasing everything from equipment and feed to insurance and professional services.

- Canaan farmers have been good neighbors, playing key roles in everything from town government and volunteer services. They are a strong support to education, particularly at the regional high school.

- Farmland, many hundreds of acres of it, is an important part of Canaan real estate. If no longer farmed, it could — surely would — be turned to other uses, some of which could have a big impact, not necessarily for the better, on Canaan life and taxes.

These realities are not new. What's new in the 1990s is the growing conflict farmers face

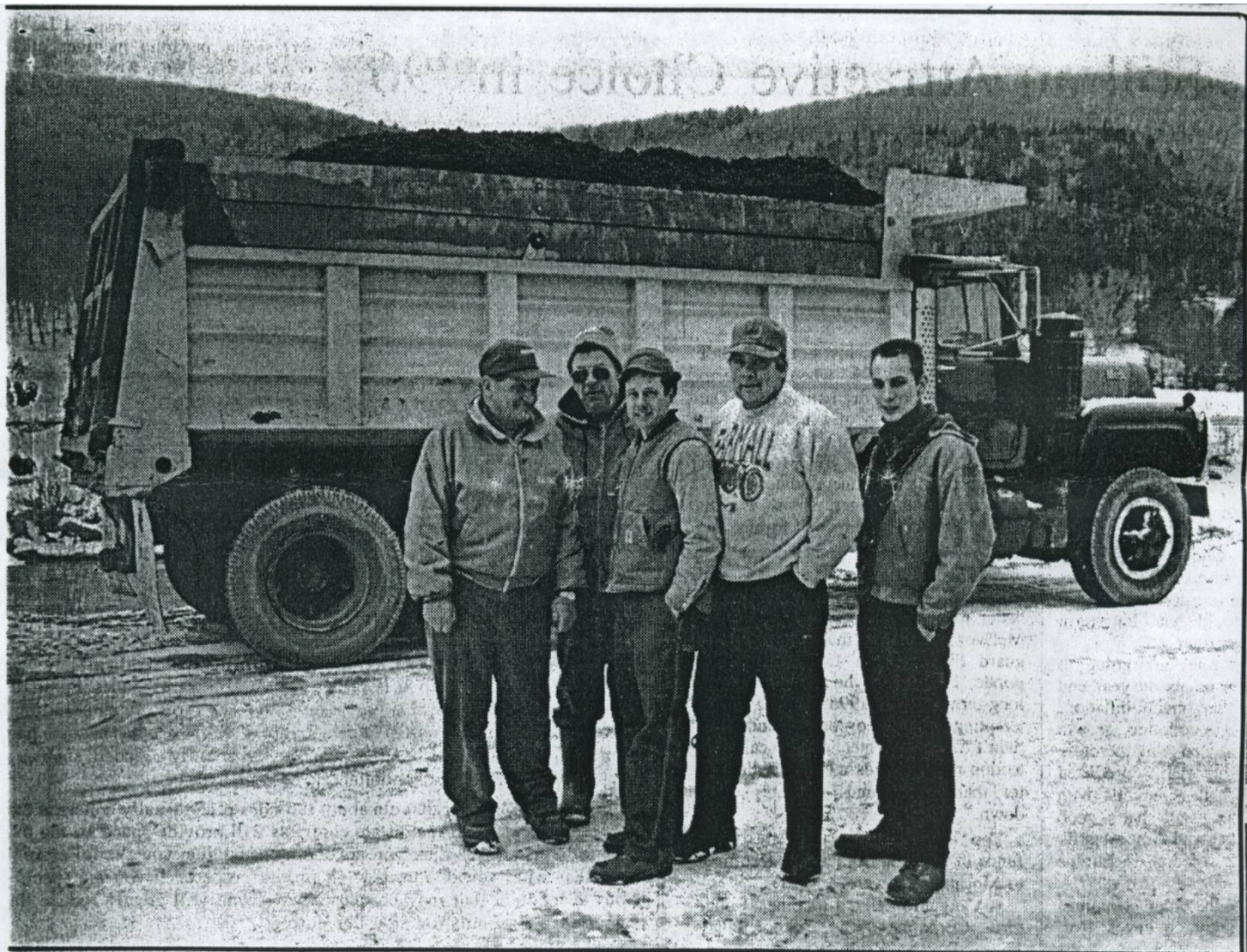
Tough regulations and the threat of tougher laws yet to come have already helped push some farmers out of state.

between the huge quantities of manure their cows produce and another reality: Connecticut's absolutely valid concern for clean water and clear air. Tough regulations and the threat of tougher laws yet to come have already helped push some farmers out of state.

Canaan's remaining dairy farmers could well join the exodus but they'd rather not. They say one piece of a strategy to keep them here could be a methane generating plant that would turn the problem of manure into energy and a fertilizer with an odorless offensive to farm neighbors. The idea does seem a possible way to cope with reality on several fronts,

Farmers ask the town's EDC to help them seek funding for an economic study of the generator idea. They hope for some discussion of this proposal at Monday's commission meeting. It would be heartening to see not only that discussion but a turnout of non-farming Canaan citizens.

The future of Canaan farming has a lot to do with the future of Canaan.



From left, Robert Jacquier, Doug Carlson, Ben Freund, Dave Jacquier and Bobby Jacquier at Laurelbrook farm.

Judith Petrovich

Canaan, Land of Manure and Money?

By ALISTAIR HIGHER

A dairy farm produces vast quantities of two valuable products: milk, of course, and manure. At a large, state-of-the-art operation in Canaan, after Jacquier's Laurelbrook farm, about 600 mature Holsteins munched corn silage and deposited manure with abandon before their dday milking one morning this week. Since a cow can produce 90 pounds of manure a day—ninety pounds of manure a day—a sizable mountain of manure was the end result.

That manure is valuable. Typically, after it has been composted—piled up for curing—for a while, it is spread back on the cornfields and pastures, where it puts nitrates and other nutrients back into the soil. Most farmers can't use all the manure they can get.

But that manure must be carefully managed to avoid pollution problems, particularly at the farms like those in Canaan along Route 44, which borders on the Blackberry River, a tributary of the Housatonic River. The water quality of the watershed beneath is constantly monitored, and while there apparently has never been a problem, it is in the farmers' interests to ensure that they are in full control of runoffs from their manure storage places.

And increasingly, farmers in Litchfield County have come under the eye of their non-agrarian neighbors who have problems with the smell of manure or the sight of manure-laden trucks dropping traces of the stuff on the road in front of their cars.

So seven farms in the Canaan area have formed the Canaan Valley Agricultural Cooperative, to better manage their manure. With a grant of \$240,000 from the state

Department of Agriculture, the farms are collaborating on manure storage and treatment. The cooperative has so far built a 380-cow manure storage tank at David Jacquier's Elm Knoll farm and a 650-cow manure separator at Laurelwood farm. Within the next few years, the remaining farms are expected to get grant funds to improve their manure storage and distribution programs.

Originally, it was thought the group could create one, large manure storage facility, but that has been deemed unfeasible because of trucking costs. Instead, the group plans to cooperate to improve the manure handling on each farm, and any excess storage capacity is to be shared.

There may be a new cash crop in all of this as well. If all goes according to plan, the cooperative may be selling bags of its dried manure to home gardeners, nurseries and

FARMING

Dairymen in Canaan Teaming Up To Handle—or Harvest—Manure

Continued from Page Twenty-One farmers here say, they would never be able to afford the improvements to their operations.

Mr. Freund, of Freund Farm Inc., has plans to improve his manure storage program. He took a few moments, while driving to the post office, to explain the problem of handling manure. "The most efficient thing to do with manure is to put it back on the ground," he begins. The problem is that during the winter months, that manure will not break down on the frozen and snow-covered fields, which means it can run off and create environmental problems. Also, manure spread at the wrong time will not have the nutritive effect on corn of manure spread at the right time in the growing cycle.

And so as farming has become more scientific and cost-effective, farmers have started to store manure over the winter, to be put into the ground in the spring. But storage creates a "time

crunch" in April for the farmer, who has to spread all of the manure accumulated over the winter in the same two weeks that he plants corn. For that reason, the handling of manure has to be as simple and efficient as possible. Separating manure into easily handled solids and liquids, and improved pumping systems for the liquid manure, will cut down on the time and expense of trucking it around to the fields, and make the operation more efficient, he predicts.

There are also, he notes, occasional problems with critics who object to the smell of manure or traces of it on the road. That is not a problem in Canaan, both Mr. Freund and Mr. Jacquier say. Canaan is a working town that is used to having farm trucks on the roads. But many of these farmers use fields in neighboring towns such as Sharon and Salisbury where farms are becoming more scarce. Improved manure storage and

handling should improve that situation as well, Mr. Freund notes.

"There is a real loss of a sense of reality, and it is too bad," he remarks of the difficulties some farmers face with their neighbors. "People don't know where their food comes from. Well it comes from the soil and it smells," he laughs. The manure put back in the soil is what continues to enrich it. "The soil is decomposing, and it's alive," he says.

Kathleen Johnson, of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service, oversaw construction of the manure storage tank on Elm Knoll farm. The manure cooperative, she says, is one of only two that she is aware of in the country. The other is in Washington State.

"The concept of manure management has been a concern for quite a while, and environmental regulations have focused more and more on those issues. There was a law passed in Vermont last year, and it had to do with restricted winter spreading of manure, and so that is where the regulations are going," she explains. "People don't want to spread manure on frozen ground where it might flow directly into the water."

The Blackberry River, which runs directly behind the farms on Route 44, is of particular concern, she noted. "Any water studies that have been done have always shown the water quality to be extremely good, but they feel responsible for maintaining that water quality, they want to make sure that it stays that way," she says of local farmers.

The other farms in the cooperative are Carlwood farm, Sunset Hill farm, Dennis H. Jasmine's farm, and Pine Meadow farm. The group is also looking into the possibility of selling methane, another byproduct of manure storage. The group has 1,300 mature cows, which produce about 117,000 pounds of manure a day. Member farms also have 2,000 acres of corn and 1,250 acres in hay. The group hopes to have two new manure pits and two new separators within the year.

