

FEED TRUCKS DRIVE UNDER 100-FT. SILO

First-Of-Its-Kind Drive-Through Silo

After comparing the economics of bunker silos to upright silos, brothers Rick and Norm Atwater of Barker, N.Y., decided to stick with upright silos. But the new silo they put up is unlike any you've ever seen before.

The 100-ft. tall, 30-ft. dia. poured concrete structure has a 12-ft. high drive-through alley underneath it for fast and easy unloading. As far as they know, the Atwaters say the new-style silo is the first of its kind.

Their new silo was built by Sollenberger Silos Inc. (P.O. Box N, Chambersburg, Pa. 17201; ph 717 264-9588; fax 2677).

Here are a few of the engineering innovations that went into the silo. Twelve 18-in. dia. columns, each containing 1 cu. yd. of poured concrete, run along each wall of the drive-through. They support the floor of the silo which is made of 15-in. thick reinforced concrete.

The silo is equipped with a Big Jim unloader from J-Star that unloads down a 19-in. flue at center which is formed when filling the silo. The Atwaters pull their 9,000-lb. capacity Knight Reel Auggie 3450 TMR mixer into the silo and drop 700 to 800 lbs. of haylage per minute into it using a remote control that activates the unloader.

"It's 'push button' farming that's as convenient and accurate as it gets. That's important when you're mixing up to eight batches and making eight trips through it a day," Atwater says. "All you do is push the on button, set the mixer scales, and push the off button just before you're at the desired weight. There's absolutely no guessing as there would be if you were loading the mixer with a payloader out of a bunker silo."

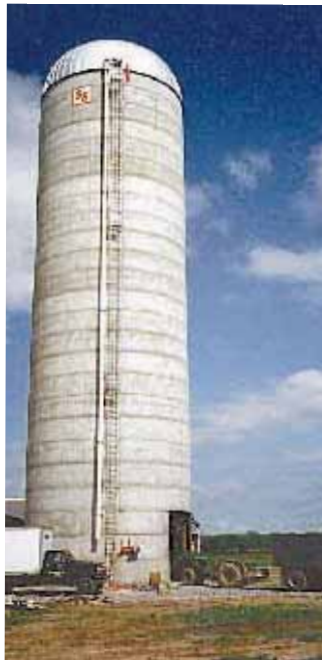
By reducing spoilage and the labor to fill, pack and unload bunk silos, the Atwaters and Sollenberger Silos agree the big silo is more cost-effective in the long run.

Initial outlay of \$80,000 for the silo was about twice what a comparable capacity bunker silo would cost, Atwater notes. However, on a cost per stored ton basis over the silo's 20 year life, the bunker would be \$14.80 per ton, compared with \$8.80 for the concrete silo. The estimate includes a minimum of 15% spoilage in a bunker silo, compared with 5% in the silo.

Atwater says the silo itself is working out beautifully but that there have been a few operational and breakage problems with the unloader.

"There are few problems unloading, but it doesn't keep up very well when filling the silo," he says. "This unloader would probably work better with a 20 or 24-ft. dia. structure."

The Atwaters may put up another drive-



The 30-ft. dia. poured concrete structure has a 12-ft. high drive-through alley underneath it for fast and easy unloading.



Twelve 18-in. dia. columns run along each wall of drive-through to support the silo floor, which is made of 15-in. thick reinforced concrete.

through silo if they expand from 300 to 400 Holsteins as planned, he adds.

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Two-wheeled unit carries a 30-in. wide roll of plastic and has an arm with a short spear that sticks into top center of bale. You roll unit around bale, using a hand-cranked winch to move the roll of plastic down.

NO HYDRAULICS NEEDED - JUST MANPOWER

"Poor Man's" Bale Wrapper

"It lets one man wrap a bale without a tractor or other power source," says inventor Roy Sampson, Lumberport, W. Va., about his manually-operated "side winder" bale wrapper that's designed to wrap the outer circumference of 650 to 1,000-lb. round bales.

The two-wheeled unit is made from lightweight aluminum and weighs only 35 lbs. It carries a 30-in. wide roll of plastic and has an arm with a short spear that sticks into the top center of the bale. You simply tie the loose end of the plastic to one of the twine strings and roll the unit around the bale, using a hand-cranked winch to move the roll of plastic down.

"It sells for less than \$600 and does as good a job as conventional 3-pt. hydraulic bale wrappers that sell for \$6,000 to \$12,000," says Sampson. "I got the idea because I have only a few cows and didn't want to spend the money for a conventional bale wrapper. I've sold about 30 units to local farmers, many of whom use Vermeer 504 and 504C balers that make 4 by 5-ft. bales weighing 600 to 1,000 lbs. apiece. It takes only a little more than one minute to wrap a bale which is faster than you can wrap them with a hydraulically-operated bale wrapper. One person can easily tip a 500-lb. bale up on end, although it may require two people to tip a 1,000-lb. bale."

Sampson says it takes about four passes to completely wrap a bale. There's enough plastic on each roll to wrap 80 to 90 bales. He tips the bale up onto a small wood platform so he can wrap it all the way to the bottom.

Both the vertical shaft and the top arm can be extended 12 in. to use the unit on larger bales. The unit breaks down into two pieces for storage or transport by simply removing three pins - one from the vertical shaft, one from the extendable arm, and one from the rod that holds the plastic.

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Unit breaks down into two pieces for storage or transport by removal of three pins.

