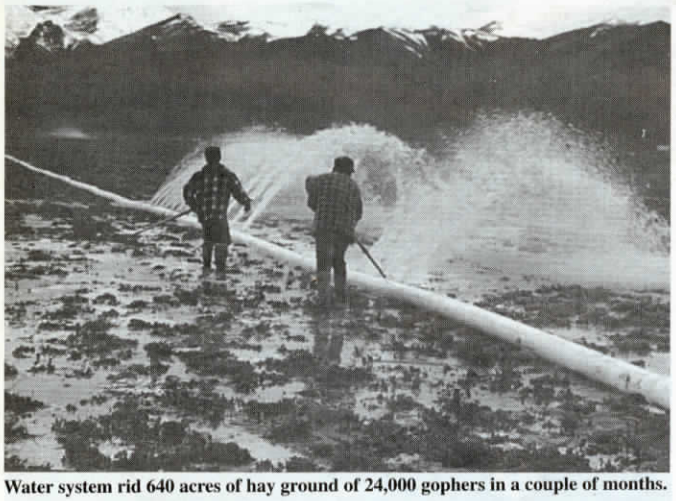
FARM SHOW

"Best Ideas"



Water system rid 640 acres of hay ground of 24,000 gophers in a couple of months.

They Clear Gopher Infested Fields By Flooding Them With Water

By Alan Greenway

"I finally threw up my hands in disgust," says Gary Graves of High Desert Ranch near Denio, Nev. "The gophers were so thick that I couldn't take two steps without stepping on a mound. We were going through sickle sections on our swather like mad."

High Desert Ranch's newly acquired 3,000 acres of older hay ground needed to be reseeded, but Graves didn't want to waste alfalfa seed on the pocket gophers.

"During the first six months we were frantically trying to trap and poison them," Graves recalls. "But we weren't having much luck."

He had to find a way to not only control the gophers, but also to virtually eradicate them before he could begin reseeding. Recalling that gophers come out of their burrows whenever fields are flood-irrigated, he decided to use the same approach to get them to the surface on his sprinkler-irrigated land.

He had a local supplier deliver a half mile of 8-in. dia. gated pipe. He attached two quarter-mile sections of the pipe to his main line, assigned two workers with shovels in hand to each section, and opened about 40 gates at a time. As the gophers emerged from their flooded burrows, they were quickly killed.

Because the flooding was done in the months of November and February, the gophers emerged into colder weather and almost died of hypothermia before the shovels even arrived on the scene.

After a 60-ft. wide swath was flooded and the rodents eliminated, the pipe was moved by hand to the adjacent 60 ft. It took two to three hours to control the gophers along each quarter-mile-long swath and 10 to 15 minutes to move the pipe each time.

"In six weeks last winter, we cleaned up 320 acres and took off 14,000 gophers," Graves reports. "Last spring we did another 320 acres and took off 10,000 gophers."

A few gophers escaped, but he figures he got 95% control.

Another advantage was the increased hay yield provided by the extra water. "By getting that extra water in the ground last fall and this spring, we had a tremendous first cutting of hay. The extra hay more than paid for the pumping costs," says Graves.

The pumping rate was 1,500 gal. per min. "You have to get a lot of water in the burrows and you have to get it in fast," he says.

Graves says he plans to use the procedure again on two more badly infested 320-acre parcels this fall and next spring. He hopes to eventually find a way to suspend gated pipe from a center pivot irrigation system so that he can flood out gophers as the pivot moves around the field.

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Ceramic Tiles Great Choice For Mangers

When Henk Schuurmans converted a tie-stall to a free-stall dairy barn last fall, one of the details he never thought about twice was what manger surface to use.

"We went with ceramic tiles because we had them in the tie-stall barn we were converting," says Schuurmans, manager of the Coopon Flora Farm near Almira, Ontario. "The tiles were 10 years old and they still looked like the day we put them in. They weren't pitted from the acids in silage as any other surface would have been.

"We clean up leftover feed daily with a Deere lawn tractor with 4-ft. angled blade and rubber tip to prevent damage. It takes only a minute to clean each manger - one-half to one-third the time you'd spend cleaning concrete mangers. We use a pressure washer two to four times a year to remove lodged feed from the grout."

The tiles line mangers on each side of the 200-ft. long barn. Three rows of the 8-in. sq. by 1/4-in. thick glazed ceramic tiles were used. Cost of tiling the mangers, including using acid-resistant grout, was $2.50 per sq. ft.

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Ceramic tiles installed in mangers are easy to clean and wear like iron.

Junked Tires Protect Against Lagoon Spills

Here's a new use for old tires: Bury them in a ditch around liquid manure lagoons to protect against spills.

Tire-filled buffer zones provide effective protection at a fraction of the cost of conventional clay or plastic drainage tiling, according to Dodger Enterprises. The Fort Dodge, Iowa, company has set up experiments using some 60,000 whole, chipped and shredded tires.

"It won't stop a major spill when a lagoon or storage system collapses, but it'll serve as an effective early warning and containment system for smaller spills or major seepage from lagoons," says president Ernie Kersten.

The idea is to dig a 2 or 3-ft. wide trench all the way around a lagoon, making it 2 ft. deeper than the lagoon's lowest point and with a 1 to 2° slope from each corner to the middle of each side. A standpipe, or monitoring well, is installed at that lowest point on each side to detect seepage and pump it back into the lagoon, Kersten notes.

The trench is filled with 6 to 8 ft. of shredded or chipped tires and is then covered over with earth.

Tire-filled trenches require a lot less labor to set up and they're safer for workers who don't have to enter trenches to lay pipe, risking cave-ins.

Although the system hasn't yet been approved by the Iowa DNR, Kersten expects that it will be soon.

The cost of such a system is expected to run about half of conventional plastic or clay pipe drainage systems, Kersten says. Several interested pork producers have already contacted the company, he notes.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Dodger Enterprises, 1525 Ave. O, Fort Dodge, Iowa 50501 (ph 515 576-1767; fax 3343).

Ditches filled with chipped and shredded junk tires provide cheap protection against lagoon spills and leaks.