



Green County

Waste Separation and Soil Health Benefits

Background

The Truttmann family has been dairy farming in rural Blanchardville, Wis., since 1899 and they continue to be driven towards improving and growing their operation today. The Truttmanns are currently milking 400 cows and operating 700 acres of land. For the family, conserving natural resources has been a cornerstone to build upon, knowing that in using resources wisely, there will always be opportunity in family farming.

The family’s conservation practices include 20 years of rotational grazing to improve animal health, productivity, and effectively utilized pastureland. Cropland practices include reduced and no-tillage, contour strips, and nutrient management to reduce soil erosion. Barnyard runoff has been reduced and eliminated using clean water diverting practices in the animal feeding areas.

Program Successes

It was apparent after a recent expansion, innovation and improvement was needed in waste handling processes on the farm. Many options were explored with the help of NRCS; the family found that a waste separation system with an expanded manure storage system would reduce manure runoff and improve soil health.

“I didn’t like spreading manure on the snow in the winter,” said Dan Truttmann. “We knew we were losing manure and those associated nutrients in snow melt. Those nutrients are needed for growing our crops and not good in our streams.”

With an interest in improving soil health, Dan considered the benefits of a manure separation system and the use of separated manure as bedding in the freestalls. Separated manure solids are applied to cropland fields to fertilize crops. Hauling only solids is cheaper to transport farther from the farm and the liquid can then be applied to fields near the farm site.

“We are really interested in using manure solids to improve the soil health and biological actions in our soils. Research has indicated improved soil processes will improve our yields,” said Dan.



A manure separator removes the manure solids for use as animal bedding or compost.

The Truttmann’s applied for the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) to assist with installation costs of the system. “This is the first waste separation facility NRCS has assisted with in Green County,” said Jason Thomas, District Conservationist. “We expect more interest in these practices as the technology advances. This is a great system to avoid manure runoff associated with snow melt in Green County. Our local workgroup has determined these systems as a top priority to reduce manure runoff in our streams.”

This is not the first partnership forged between the Truttmann farm and NRCS using EQIP funds. The family utilizes cover crops on tillable acreage as a means to keep soils anchored where they can best be utilized, rather than ending up in streams and waterways. With an interest in alternative crops, the Truttmann’s attended a cover crop field day put on by NRCS in order to learn more about different cover crop mixes. Attendance at the field day resulted in a decision to use tur-nips, peas, and barley as an innovative cover crop after alfalfa.

The real benefactor of this partnership is the land, with which proper nutrients and cleaner waters will serve many. With healthy soil being a key component in keeping this family business viable and growing—the payback for the Truttmann Family is a sustainable future that they can proudly boast is on the leading edge of innovation in Green County.