

Soil Award Farm Has 260 Acres of Trefoil-Orchardgrass Pasture

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By a Staff Writer

BLOOMFIELD, IA. — The 260 acres of birdsfoot trefoil and orchardgrass pasture on the farm of Pearl Spilman and his son, Dean, have made possible a gradual increase in production of hogs, beef cattle and sheep.

"We're producing 600 hogs this year," the father said, "which is the most we've ever raised. We've kept increasing a little each year for the last five years. The same is true with cattle, too."

A well-balanced livestock

program has been developed as pastures have been renovated and their productivity improved. The 92 Hereford cows and 138 Corriedale ewes get much of their feed from grazing.

Calves and lambs, except those kept for replacements in breeding herds, are raised on grass and finished for market on grain.

Calves are fed corn silage and a small amount of grain during winter and are nearly on full feed at the time new grass is available in the

spring. They are then moved to pasture and put on full feed of grain.

Lambs graze on pasture until winter weather gets bad, usually about Jan. 1, when they are brought into drylot and put on full feed for marketing about mid-March.

THE SPILMANS have followed a grassland farming program for several years on their 732-acre farm. This year they had only 74 acres of corn and 13 acres of soybeans.

"Our grassland program has worked out real well for us," said Dean, 41, and his father agreed. "But we do have to buy a lot of corn for feeding," he continued. They have 74 crop acres idled under the Feed Grain Program.

The Spilmans, who live three miles north of Bloomfield, have a complete soil conservation plan for their farm, and recently were honored as the year's outstanding conservation farmers in a 13-county area in southeast Iowa.

The Spilmans were sweepstakes winners in southeast Iowa in a soil conservation achievement awards program sponsored by The Register and Tribune and Iowa Farm and Home Register.

Conservation work on the Spilman farm includes 7.5 miles of terraces, 4 acres of



Pearl Spilman (left) and his son, Dean.

grassed waterways, 8 ponds for livestock water, and contouring of row crops on hill land.

Some of the first terraces in Davis County were built on the original 135-acre Spilman farm by young men in the civilian conservation corps (CCC) during the depression of the 1930's.

Other terraces were built by farmers using horses and slip-type scrapers. The farmers were permitted to do this work in payment for grain

obtained from U.S. stocks during two years of drought.

The elder Spilman, 77, was one of the first farmers in southern Iowa to spread agricultural limestone on his land to improve the conditions of the soil for growing alfalfa.

The limestone used at that time was shipped in by rail and was a coarse material, about the size of a lead pencil eraser, and was spread with an endgate seeder.

"Some of the neighbors and other farmers were very crit-

ical of this type of soil treatment at that time," the elder Spilman recalled.

He quoted one farmer as saying "look at that darn fool scattering rocks on his field while here I am paying people to pick up rocks and haul them away."

SPILMAN has a long record of public service for farmers. He helped organize the Davis County Soil Conservation District, was one of the original commissioners and served as the first chairman.

He also was first chairman of the Southern Iowa Experimental Farm, a director on the board of the Rural Electric Co-operative for 24 years, and also served on the local school and county hospital boards.

Dean became a partner in the farming operation upon his return from army service in 1946. Dean built a lot of terraces with a plow.

The father gives the son credit for much of the conservation work, saying "maybe I've done a little prodding but he's done the work."

Dean and his wife, Betty Lee, have four children. Betty Lee is a school teacher, now teaching fourth and fifth grade at the Floris Center of the Davis County Community School System.