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Altheide 'Pioneers'—

★ 21, 1963 ★
may 1963

Increase Seen In Farm Tile

The local Soil Conservation District is predicting an increasing use of tile on Davis county farm land.

Tile is common on richer land to the north, but its application to poorer soils of southern Iowa has been infrequent.

Although there have been a few smaller tile jobs in the county, Donald Altheide, farmer of 10 miles southeast of Bloomfield, is pioneering what's thought to be the biggest system in existence in Davis county.

Contractor Russell Pence of Keota, delayed last week by wet weather, finished the tiling job yesterday on Altheide's farm, laying 5 miles of tile beneath 39 acres of Big Wyacondah bottomland.

Altheide hasn't had any consistent success with raising crops on the land, which drained poorly. He hopes now he can

farm the land every year.

Verle Arnold, work unit conservationist with the SCS, said the theory behind tiling is to lower the water table, giving plant roots "more feeding range" before they hit free water.

If the tile work properly, Altheide will be able to get into the field sooner in the spring, too.

Government cost-sharing is available for tiling, with federal funds picking up 40 to 50 per cent of the bill, including tile and labor.

The average tile job would run about \$120 an acre, Arnold said. If the federal government paid half the cost, it would leave the farmer a cost of \$60 an acre.

In Davis county, tiling work would probably be confined to bottomland, said Arnold, although not all bottomland would profit from tiling. Some soil is too heavy to make tiling pay. Soil sample holes were punched all over Altheide's 39 acres to determine soil suitability for tiling.

Arnold said all major creeks have bottomland that could probably benefit from tiling—including Fox, Soap, Fabius, Big Wyacondah.

This spring, a tiling system that is "fairly complete," according to Arnold, was finished on the Ralph Baker farm 5 miles west of town. Around 15 acres were involved, located on the Big Wyacondah. Wayne Proctor farms the land.

Altheide's project, however, is the largest to be engineered by the SCS unit here.