



With an operation that includes a total of 100,000-plus chickens, cattle and sows on slightly more than 900 acres, Porter employs several environmentally friendly programs on the farm. Such measures have won him accolades from neighbors and environmental groups, such as the North Carolina Cooperative Extension and the North Carolina Soil and Water Conservation Commission, who awarded Porter a River Friendly Farmer designation.



waste by washing it into a lagoon and using that water to irrigate his pastures.

The economics are sound, because that saves them from buying so much commercial fertilizer. But Porter is also proud of the environmentally friendly practice. “We view that as the ultimate recycling,” he says.

Always About the Land

And with Porter’s self-imposed role as land steward, it’s no surprise that the environment is so important to him.

He is conscientious of his adjacent neighbors, a daycare and a church. He says by following best management practices, (for instance, a daily regimen of cleaning his facilities), he can keep the odors of his triple-livestock operation in check. He also releases parasitic wasps that kill fly eggs, significantly reducing the number of those annoying insects.

He placed 109 acres of his land under a

conservation easement, which means that land can only be developed for agriculture. His long-term plan is to broaden the easement, adding acres as he can, until all of it is covered. This is chiefly to preserve the land for his family, but he’s also keeping his neighbors in mind. “We want them to be happy with this open land rather than housing developments,” he says.

Locally, Porter has lobbied successfully for zoning laws that prevent developers from carving up land for large tracts of houses. He has spoken out on both the state and national level against estate taxes he believes are unfair to farmers.

As an advocate for farmers’ rights, Porter champions numerous causes and is generous with the hours he volunteers. He offers a strong voice to the laundry list of influential organizations in which he participates in his community and region: He is a member of the Board of Directors for Carolina Farm Credit, county president for Cabarrus County Farm Bureau, chairman of the Extension Advisory Committee and a member of the North Carolina Poultry Federation.

“Tommy is one who doesn’t mind speaking up for agriculture,” says Blalock. “He has lots and lots of credibility. When he speaks, people listen. He gets the big picture.”

And it is Porter’s broad, forward-thinking vision that underscores every farming decision he makes. “While I’m taking care of it, I want to improve the land,” he says. “I want to leave it better than I found it.” **FL**



Smooth Ride, Terrific Visibility

Tommy Porter just sticks to the cab’s radio. He admits he’s not quite as tech savvy as his son Derek (above), a full-time firefighter who works on the farm on his days off. Derek scrolls through his iPod while spending the bulk of the tractor hours managing the family’s hay fields.

Part of Porter’s award as Farmer of the Year included the year-long use of any Massey Ferguson tractor serviced by Statesville Ag and Turf. He says he selected the MF5465 for its size. The 100 pto horsepower is the perfect fit for spreading fertilizer on his hay fields, then cutting and baling it when the time is right.

“It’s nice and roomy,” says Tommy, which is no surprise considering it has one of the largest cabs in its class. And the 61 square feet of glass translates to an immense amount of visibility. Another feature they really love is that the cab has its own suspension. “It makes a big difference when you spend 8 or 10 hours riding in something that’s comfortable,” says Tommy.

With one hand, they can move smoothly through the gears of the clutchless Dyna 4, 16-speed transmission. And because the environment, and quite frankly the economy, are so important to the Porters, the Tier III, AGCO Power engine, with exceptional fuel economy and low emissions, makes a great deal of sense.

Because in the past there were no large Massey Ferguson dealers near the Porters, their farm has used John Deere equipment. But this honeymoon period with the MF5465 has made a believer of Derek, who uses it the most.

“Every time he uses it,” says Tommy, “he makes a point to say, ‘I really like that tractor. I like it better than the John Deere.’”