



Hugh and Boyd Smith (above) added a dozen concrete watering troughs around the farm, along with surrounding heavy-use areas, with help from NRCS.

More Troughs, Better Pastures

Because the troughs are scattered over Smith's four pastures and bull lot, it also means the cattle don't have nearly as far to go for water. Boyd estimates they don't have to walk over 500 feet to drink.

"That aids dramatically in pasture management," says Auburn University Animal Scientist Frank Owsley. He says if cattle have to travel a long distance for water, they'll only graze around the water source, dumping manure and urine in a smaller area, overgrazing that area, and letting the rest of the pasture go underutilized.

"If you are doing a good job of managing your pastures, you're doing a good job of managing the environment," says Owsley.

Other Conservation Projects

While the water lines, troughs and surrounding heavy-use areas were built in partnership with the NRCS, they are by no means the only conservation projects Boyd has tackled. Most of his gates have



THE RIGHT EQUIPMENT. Boyd uses a Massey Ferguson® 5445 tractor with a 1070 loader for many of the chores around his farm. He also has a Hesston 3727 tedder. Both were purchased from Ray's Farm Equipment in Newberry, S.C.



heavy-use areas under them made up of filter cloth and 6 inches of gravel.

"I don't like mud holes," says the veteran cattleman. "I don't want to get stuck." The heavy-use areas also keep Betty out of the mud when she opens and closes gates for him on their trips through the pastures.

There is also the hay barn with a gravel floor that extends out one end. "A hay barn will pay for itself in 3 years," says Boyd. The gravel outside is to store extra hay when needed so the part of the rolls next to the ground doesn't rot.

He also maintained heavy-use areas under and around his hay rings for years. "We put 6 inches of gravel on them every year, 25 tons, until 2 years ago. Now we unroll hay," he explains.

"We roll it out for 60 to 70 feet,"

he adds. "The mamas and babies will come up and eat it and clean it up."

Better Than You Found It

Since there is no For Sale sign on the farm, Boyd has more projects on his to-do list. Number one is fencing the cattle out of the ponds.

"We'll let them in for a day or two at a time to keep the grass down, then move them out," says Hugh.

"If the cost-share money is available from the NRCS, I'll do it," says Boyd. And if the money isn't available, bet on him doing it anyway.

"You are supposed to leave the soil better than you found it," he states. "You are also supposed to preserve the water. It is a precious element. If you don't, you are a pretty poor person." **FL**