

Livestock Production

New farmer uses fabric-covered barn

By WENDY SWEETER

FABRIC hoop barn builders disagree with the notion that their buildings are “fragile.”

Tyler Ammann, owner of Whetstone Ag Supply Inc., says his Wilmot, S.D.-based business has evolved since he started the company in 1999.

“Everybody, when they started out, looked at them as fragile. Some of the early ones that came out were single-tube instead of a truss arch and wood posts. They had wood back walls and they weren’t made for snow load,” he says.

Ammann, who prefers the term “fabric-covered engineered structures” over “hoop barns,” says his company went away from constructing buildings with wood components and started manufacturing its own steel I-beam. In 2010, Whetstone Ag Supply started working with Springfield, S.D.-based Rush-Co for the fabric-covered buildings.

Ammann likes working with Rush-Co because it manufactures everything in-house. “They make everything. For me as a company selling their product, that’s a really big deal. They don’t pass the buck if there is an issue,” he says.

Dan Fathke, Rushmore Buildings national account manager for Rush-Co, says the company manufactures the trusses and fabric covers in its own facility in Springfield.

Jared Questad, a 21-year-old beef producer from Baltic, S.D., put up a Rush-Co building from Whetstone Ag Supply in September.

He decided he wanted this type of building after working on a feedlot while going to school at Lake Area Technical Institute in Watertown, S.D. Besides his previous experience with a hoop building for feeding cattle, Questad did some research and found some positives on ventilation, and that condensation won’t hang on the roof.

Questad’s building is 50 feet wide and 196 feet long. The barn is split into two pens that will hold 125 head of cattle. He filled the new barn in October with commercial cattle that weighed about 600 pounds, and he will take them to market at 1,350 pounds.

The main feature Questad likes about his new building is the amount of light in

Key Points

- Jared Questad expands his livestock feeding with a fabric-covered building.
- The beginning farmer worked in feedlot with barn while going to college.
- Structures have evolved from hoop barns to engineered structures.

the barn.

“With the canvas top, you do get light that comes down through the top. It has a transparent way of letting light through, whereas if you have a metal roof, you’re not going to get any light through,” Questad says.

Ammann points out that the barn does let in a lot of light during the day. At night, two LED lights pointed up at the canvas

reflect a lot of light into the barn.

“It’ll shoot up and diffuse itself. There are no shadows in here. That’s why livestock like it so well,” Ammann says.

Questad does admit some concern about damage to the tarp, but not too much because they are supposed to last 15 years. He also says that’s why he has insurance.

“You could go and puncture that and it will distribute the strength so that does not keep tearing,” Ammann says. “We have a fabric welder that can weld it back shut.”

Fathke says the fabric is a 12.5-ounce polyethylene. The material is also neutral in that does not conduct heat or cold as metal does.

Rush-Co engineers each building to fit the weather conditions of the county where it will stand. For Questad’s building,

it was engineered to withstand a 50-pound snow load and 90 mph wind.

One state-of-the-art item that Rush-Co makes is the automated curtain, which Questad has on his barn.

In the old curtain system, it would take multiple people to manually crank the curtain up or down. Rush-Co designed a curtain system that can roll a 600-foot curtain up or down in two minutes with the touch of a button.

Questad looks forward to getting cattle into his new barn and seeing how the system works out.

“I went to Lake Area, I worked for a feedlot and really enjoyed how things worked there, and how you can be so specific and precise at a feedlot,” Questad says. “When I got home, that’s what I wanted to get into.”

CATTLE BARN: Jared Questad feeds cattle in the new 50-by-196-foot fabric covered barn he put up.

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