

Community News
May, 2017

Last month we took a look at the ways that water is brought onto Michaela Farm through the underground watering system that circles the farm. This month we want to take a look at how the farm gets rid of excess water brought on by heavy rains. Natural drainage occurs by some of the rain water being absorbed into the soil and gradually making its way down to the natural water table under the ground. Natural drainage will also take place when the rain water follows the natural contours of the land and empties into creeks and other natural waterways. Under normal situations, this will usually keep the land dry enough to be worked but damp enough so have water for the plants living there.

If a heavy rain occurs and the ground is soaked a little help is sometimes needed especially if there are low lying fields or fields that follow the natural contours of the land. This is where underground field tiles come in handy. Field tiles are underground porous pipes that help to carry water away from the field and into ditches, creeks or other natural waterways. Field tiles were originally made of concrete or red clay piping. They work well and will last for 60 to 80 years. But as with anything made of concrete or red clay, they will eventually crack, break and crumble. The original field tiles at the farm were made of concrete and red clay. They did a wonderful job over the years carrying off the excess water but age has caught up with them and they are cracking and breaking. In areas where this has occurred, sink holes are forming and some of them are quite large. This creates a danger for the workers and for the cattle. It is a danger for the workers because they can step into them without seeing them and be injured. It also creates a danger for the operation of equipment. Wheels can slip into the holes, tires can be damaged, axles cracked or broken and most importantly workers can be thrown off the equipment and hurt. Cattle also can step into the holes and break a leg and calves have been known to slip down into them. This did happen a few years ago and luckily the calf slipped in back end first. Chris had to go out and pull the calf from the hole. The calf's mother was there when the calf fell in and created such of noisy situation that people knew there was a problem. The calf and Chris were just fine but it does prove the dangers of sinkholes.

The farm has been replacing field tile over the past few years. Doing so has helped the drainage situation and sink holes are filled in as the tiles are replaced. We are about 2/3 finished with the replacement but still have a way to go. The area that is needed right now is the area around the gardens and the north pasture.

Field tiling is an expensive project and we have invested in it so that the infrastructure of the farm can continue to be improved. The good news is that that newly installed field tile has a useful life of a good 70 to 80 years. Hopefully this project will be completed in the future.