

hav901 yy ylp lcp nor
1315:gas (feature):

by Lionel martin

havana, nov 9, reuter -- the flickering, yellow flames of lamps fueled by methane gas produced from cow dung illuminate the shed during the pre-dawn milking of cows at the seven palms (siete palmas) dairy here.

the methane is produced in a do-it -yourself fermentation tank near the shed. it is part of a campaign to save petroleum which must be imported. the methane gas replaces the traditional kerosene which has been used in dairiesmilking sheds without electricity for decades.

the cuban government is sponsoring a dynamic investigation to improve the +biogas generators+ and to use available raw materials to make the fuel such as chicken and pig droppings, the juice of the sisal plant, the husk of coffee beans and the tops, hard outside covering and leaves of the sugar cane stalk.

major ephasis, nowever , is being placed on cow dung since cuba's dairy industry is growing and predawn miling in sheds without electricity is common. mobesides illumination, the cubans say, the use of the dung for producing methane gas solves a waste disposal and hygienic problem inasmuch as the residue is an excellent nitrogen fertilizer.

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the methan generator is easy to make. a hole is dug in the ground and lined with bricks. a dome-shaped cover is placed over the hole. the raw materia - cow dung mixed with water - is fed into the bottom of the hole through an underground tube. the gas accumulates in the dome-shaped cover when the fermentation process gets under way, usually within hours. the gas is siphoned off through a tube which runs to a bunsen burner type lamp or a converted coleman lamp.

the gas is 70 per cent methane, almost 30 per cent carbon dioxide with traces of nitrogen, hydrogen and sulphuric acid. the gas is highly poisonous and explosive. articles on how to build a methane generator give the rules for preventing accidents and so far none have been reported.

the cubans claim that a five hundred dollar investment in a biogas generator can save from seventy to eighty gallons of petroleum a month. a typical farm with 240 cows can produce biogas that equals 33 tonnes of kerosene and, as well, 215 tonnes of organic fertilizer each year.

--reuter/lem