

## Your manure is their bread and butter

By Betsy Freese  
Livestock Editor

**T**hey call themselves moodoo doctors. Entrepreneurs of manure. My younger brother, Ross Johnson, and his childhood buddy, Scott Bristow, own Mid-Atlantic AgriSystems in Quarryville, Pennsylvania. It's a business "dedicated entirely to the challenge of handling liquid waste efficiently, profitably, and in an environmentally safe manner," says Ross.

In other words, it's a crappy job.

But a profitable one. Their slogan says it all: Your Manure is Our Bread and Butter. Like plumbers and morticians, Ross and Scott are proof you can make a good living dealing with things most folks don't want to deal with. It's a dirty, stinky job, but someone has to do it.

Got manure? They'll haul it, pump it, agitate it, spread it and spray it. They'll sell, rent or lease you equipment. They'll help you build a manure management plan. It's a one-stop plop shop.

### No glamour, but profit

The profitable manure management business is a salient lesson for teenagers today, including mine, who might think the only decent jobs involve Wall Street, computers, the Internet, doctors, lawyers or Hollywood.

True, there's no glamour in Ross and Scott's job. "Some days I'm ankle high in [I'll substitute manure], and some days I'm waist high in it," says Ross. No problem. In fact, he once won a radio contest where listeners voted for the person they thought had the worst job. "That young man in Pennsylvania who spends his days wallowing in cow manure is the winner!" said the disc jockey.

### Let us work our voodoo on your moodoo

Recently my teenage son, Nowlan, rode around the back roads of Pennsylvania with Ross visiting dairy farms. It was a valuable learning experience. Nowlan was intrigued by Ross' presentation on farms. Ross would often pulled out a photo album full of pictures of manure and manure equipment. He showed the farmers what their manure would look like based on their cows' diet and bedding. Nowlan couldn't believe anyone would own a photo album full of pictures of "moodoo."

I wanted Nowlan to see what Ross does for a living. At

14, he is just beginning to formulate ideas for a career path. Of course, Ross, at 14, didn't have a plan to run a manure equipment business. At that age, he and Scott were too busy dreaming up ways to get into mischief, which included agitating me, not lagoons. I still can't believe those two are running a successful company, but there you have it.

Ross went to college to be an ag education instructor and ended up instructing farmers how to manage their manure. His timing was perfect, as environmental laws tightened in the 1990s. Anyone who can help farmers deal with "nutrients" is in demand today.



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### We're number 1 in number 2

You have to have a sense of humor to tackle a dirty job. If Ross and Scott weren't running a manure management business, they could probably get a job writing ad slogans. All these catchy little sayings are theirs. They have a few more involving the word feces, but my mom stopped those from seeing print.

It was a sticky subject, says Ross. **SF**

### Learn more

For more information, contact Ross Johnson and Scott Bristow at: Mid-Atlantic AgriSystems  
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**Ross Johnson (right) and Scott Bristow manage to keep their sense of humor while dealing with manure.**