

Calculating ROI For Energy Curtain Systems

ENERGY efficiency work out of Rutgers University in New Jersey notes that it took about 50,000 therms per year to heat a typical (double polyethylene-covered house with the temperature at or around 65°F) bedding plant operation in the middle of Ohio. To make an accurate calculation of energy savings and return on investment, says Kurt Parbst of Ludvig Svensson Americas, "Knowing your per therm price is key. For instance, in the 2003/2004 heating season, a local North Carolina grower spent 85 cents per therm. In the winter of

2004/2005 the per therm prices had risen to \$1 and, as we all know, much has changed since then."

Parbst says that a well-installed and well-sealed energy curtain system can save up to 50 percent of energy costs when it is being used, adding up to an average 30 to 35 percent annual savings. Nighttime use shows special cost-savings, since 80 percent of heating occurs at night.

"A rough return on investment (ROI) time period in years can therefore be calculated by dividing the installed cost by the annual dollar savings," Parbst says. This period is nor-

mally less than three years, with this year's increases making even that figure seem high.

"The higher the fuel price, the colder the winter, and the higher the desired greenhouse temperature (especially with energy demanding crops), the shorter the payback and the better the investment," Parbst says. He also notes that curtain system prices have been relatively stable for the past 10 years, while the same cannot be said for the fuel they save. Quality, well-maintained systems will last seven to 10 years. **GG**