

Research Expands At PSU To Meet State's Gaining Beef Cattle Industry

Two hundred beef cattle and 500 acres of land have produced a cooperative research project between a state university and a state correctional institution.

The project, involving Penn State University and the nearby Rockview State Correctional Institution, has the long-range goal of improving beef cattle breeding and management for the state's growing beef cattle industry while providing occupational training for Rockview inmates.

Underway for four years, studies of the Rockview land and herd have dealt with pasture renovation, fertilization, grazing methods, wintering systems, and cattle breeding. In the future, the research will concern beef cattle breeding and management methods and pasture evaluation, says Dr. Lowell L. Wilson, associate professor of animal science at Penn State.

The Rockview herd and land are presently the College's only

large-scale project involving pastures and beef cows for experimental purposes, Wilson points out. The project provides an opportunity to evaluate new forages under grazing conditions.

Profitable beef cattle breeding and management methods are more important today than ever before in Pennsylvania, Wilson claims. Beef cow numbers in the state have more than doubled in the past 12 years. New cow herds are appearing in every county, he says, some replacing dispersed dairy herds while some are started on land with no previous livestock history.

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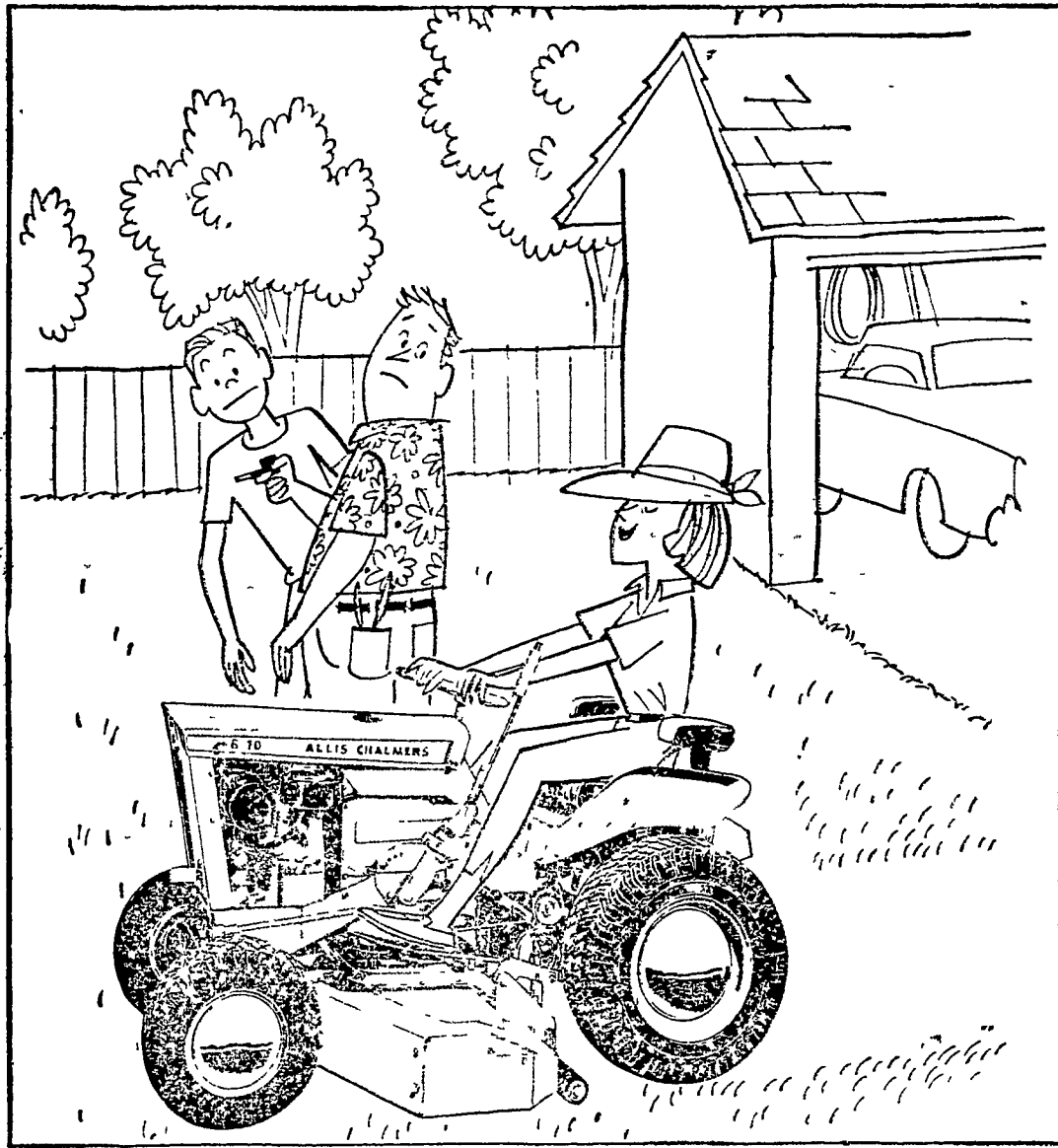
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In recent years, animal scientists and agronomists have managed the 200-cow Rockview herd on about 500 acres of pastures developed from abandoned, non-productive wasteland. Winter rations included canary waste slage, haylage, and hay.

Until 1961 the Rockview beef operation used yearling steers purchased and fed out on pasture with grain. This program had shortcomings such as getting steers with predictable inherited ability to gain economically and produce meaty, quality carcasses. Because of these shortcomings in steer feeding, an Angus-Holstein crossbred cow herd was established.

Crossbred beef cows were obtained from the dairy herds at Rockview and other correctional institutions where Angus bulls were used routinely on first-calf heifers and low-producing cows. The crossbred Angus-Holstein heifers, instead of being fed out for slaughter beef, were saved to form a crossbred Angus-Holstein cow herd. The present Rockview cow herd is composed completely of Angus-Holstein cows and the dairy herds continue to furnish replacement females.

Animal Science Department personnel at the University assist in managing the Rockview herd. Presently, they select Polled Hereford bulls and breed each of six bulls to about 25 of the crossbred Angus-Holstein cows. Semen from these bulls is donated by livestock breeders in exchange for records on the gains and carcass merit of the offspring.

"The most surprising part of the high level of performance is the fact that carcasses grad-

ing choice carry an optimum amount of fat cover over the loin and desirable amounts and distribution of muscling. The carcasses are acceptable from every standpoint and are the meaty, quality carcasses desired by today's packer and consumer," Wilson states.

When several years of records are available on the Rockview herd, they will be analyzed to determine how much difference exists between actual (Continued on Page 10)

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