

## Esther Becker . . .

# Farmer's Wife with Cooking as a Hobby



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It's up at five every morning for Mrs. John Robert (Esther) Becker, Gap R.1 to feed 126 Holstein bull calves while her husband mixes the calf starter and weighs it for each individual calf. They buy all 126 calves when they are a day or two old and keep them about fourteen weeks. They buy the calves three times a year.

These calves are kept in individual crate-type compartments that are about a foot above a concrete floor. Mrs. Becker says "We wash down with hoses thoroughly once a week and hurriedly every day. We sterilize the pens when we change calves."

The stable is equipped with air ducts which convey fresh air mixed with heated air in the winter and cool air produced with ventilating fans in summer. Gas heaters heat the air in winter. Pneumonia is their greatest problem as far as illness among the calves is concerned.

This is the fifth year Beckers have been raising the calves. They feed Provimi calf starter. They have a fifty gallon feed mixer. The calf starter is weighed and the proper amount of water added. It is agitated until completely mixed then the mixer is rolled into the stable. Each calf's feed is then weighed. Twenty-four buckets are used to feed the calves. As soon as they are emptied 24 more can be fed. No other kind of feed is ever fed to the calves.

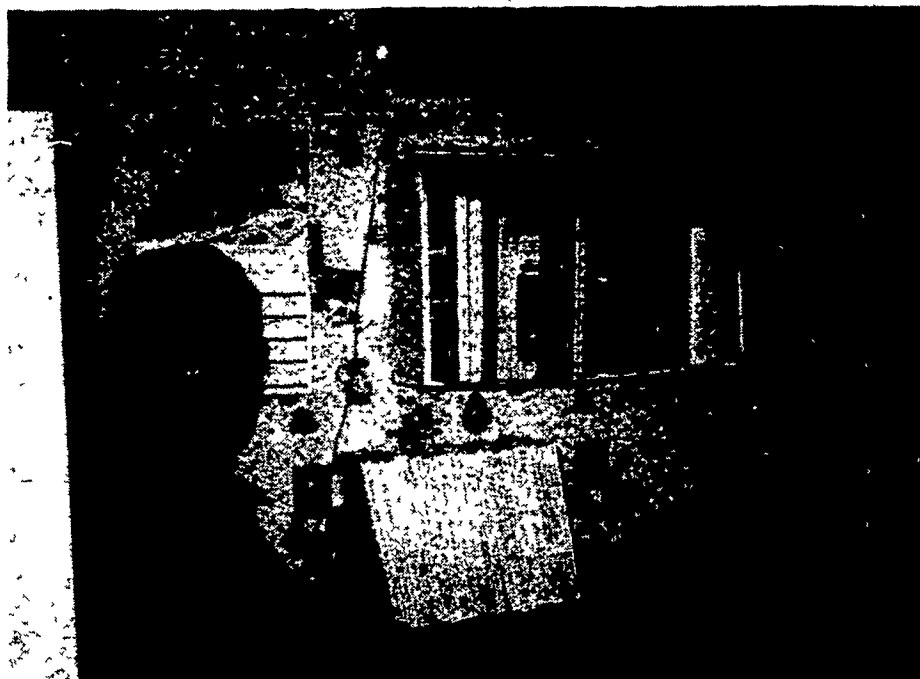
The calves are sold to two packing houses in New Jersey, either Victory Beef or Insel and Insel of Newark. A trucker hauls them to market. Beckers butcher a few calves for their own use.

Beckers raise Angus cattle. At the present time they have 53 cows, a bull and 65 to 70 calves. They keep the bull calves to raise for steers which they finish as baby beeves and raise the heifers to keep as cows.

They also have twelve Dorset sheep. They have them sheared and sell the wool.

Beckers live on what is known as "Waterloo Farm", a couple miles east of White Horse on route 340. The farm is owned by Simon Zook of Honey Brook. Bob works for him on salary, although he operates the calf project on halves. There are 195 acres in the farm, 126 of which are under cultivation and the rest is woodland and meadow. This year they are raising 83 acres of corn which is used or sold as shelled corn, 35 acres of soybeans which are sold as shelled dry beans and 8 acres of alfalfa which they feed to the cows.

Bob does quite a bit of custom work. He has a two row husker and a four row husker and sheller. They have another



Mrs. Esther Becker, Gap RD1, has baking at Salisbury Elementary over 50 cookbooks. She does the School cafeteria.

corn sheller, a big bin and dry their own corn at their farm. Besides his own he husks and shells at 16 or 16 farms. Last year he did about 300 acres. He also combines about 100 acres of soybeans, counting his own.

Bob grew up on a 130 acre dairy farm near Smithville. He and Esther have lived on this farm over nine years. When they were first married they lived at Northern Tier Children's Home in Potter County for two years. While there he was leader for a 4-H dairy heifers club and Esther was leader for a 4-H sewing and cooking club. After that they spent one year at another children's home at Bradford in McKean County, then farmed for Henry Hackman near Manheim four years.

Esther has worked at the Salisbury Elementary Cafeteria for two years. She does all the baking. She works 4 hours or more a day there and they feed as many as 400 children a day.

Beckers have three children: Debbie, 13, will be in the ninth grade at Lancaster Mennonite High School this fall. She takes guitar lessons and is learning to sew. She had sewing last year in Home Economics class at school. She is a big help to her mother.

David, 12, will be in seventh grade at Pequea Valley Intermediate School. He helps a lot on the farm.

Michael is nine years old and will be in fifth grade at Salisbury Elementary School this fall. He likes school, especially Math and reads a great deal. He also helps on the farm. The children help feed calves in the evening in place of their mother.

Beckers have two boys from Philadelphia whose mother is ill staying at their home this summer, Hal and Glenn Flesher. It is a nice experience for these city boys to spend the summer on the farm. They enjoy jumping in the old swimming hole with the Becker boys and helping with farm chores.

Beckers have two vegetable gardens. After Bob plows them Esther takes over and enlists the children as helpers to grow all the fine vegetables that she freezes. She also cans lots of tomatoes, pickles, chow chow, apple sauce and peaches and makes preserves. She freezes sour cherries for pies and some apple sauce.

Esther, the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. James Hess, near Baumgardner south of Willow Street, grew up on their farm where she helped gather and grade eggs and pick tomatoes. They now raise chickens and pigs.

Beckers belong to Old Road Mennonite Church on route 340 near their home. After teaching the youth Sunday School class for four or five years they are now Youth Advisors for all youth activities for their church. They work with young

people 14 years older. One of their responsibilities is providing transportation for them. One Sunday a month they have Bible quizzing for two teams from October to May. They recently quizzed the book of acts. They have practice sessions once a week. Their young people then take part in the Mennonite Youth Fellowship of the Lancaster Conference. Sometimes this involves traveling quite a distance. The top 8 quizzers in the conference receive scholarships, mostly in Mennonite colleges.

Their youth group has a Bible study meeting every other Monday night. They recently went to Camp Hebron Youth Camp for a three day weekend retreat. Last October they did volunteer work such as cleaning, sorting canned goods and carpentering for a weekend at Northern Tier Children's Home in Potter County. They are now furnishing religious books for the Lancaster County Prison. To raise money to buy the books they catch caged chickens and receive two cents a bird.

Esther taught seventh grade at their church Bible School the last two weeks in the evenings.

Beckers belong to Salisbury Parent Teachers Committee. They usually have a spelling bee once a year and hold a chicken barbeque once a year.

Bob belongs to the White Horse Fire Company and the White Horse Ambulance Association. He is qualified as a driver for both and has gone as an attendant.

The family goes camping in Perry County each summer and stay in a cabin. Bob loves to go deer hunting and goes to Potter County each fall where he stays in a private home. He also enjoys hunting small game. A hobby of his is collecting bottles. He has a very large collection and sometimes shows some at shows. He has received five blue and one yellow rosette for them.

Esther loves to do flower gardening as well as working in their vegetable garden. She grows mostly annuals. She says "I enjoy refinishing furniture when I have time." She has refinished several family heirlooms and is quite proud of them. She does all kinds of embroidery. She did some crewel pictures and pillows as well as patchwork and appliqued cushion tops. Another of her hobbies is reading.

She says "Cooking is my chief hobby." She collects cookbooks and has over 50 of them. However, she does like most good cooks, prepares a lot of her special dishes without a recipe but ends up with a real tasty dish all enjoy. This summer will find the Beckers having a lot of picnics for family members and the church young people.

Esther uses a few of the soybeans they raise to make baked beans. They can be soaked over night then cooked and baked.



Mrs. Becker made this pink crepe with print trim dress for her daughter. She also embroidered the pictures on the wall and made the cushion tops.