



These photos show one of the most important steps in the production of a new corn hybrid. In the left photo, the top of an emerging female shoot is cut off. In the center photo, a plastic bag is placed over the shoot to prevent

stray pollen from falling onto the silks as they emerge. The photo at the right shows a plant with silks almost ready for pollination.



Part of the work crew at the Funk corn research laboratory pausing for a bite of lunch.

## Corn

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susceptible to a particular disease, there's almost certain to be dozens of others that are resistant. So even if some crop is wiped out, you've still got a lot of corn grown."

Leaf blight and stalk rot are two problems faced by Pennsylvania corn growers, so Edmondson checks his hybrid candidates for resistance to the diseases. He inoculates the plants with the diseases, and unless they can stand up to the stress of inoculation, they are never released for sale in this area.

Another stress Edmondson is working on is late planting. "Farmers here do a lot of double-cropping," he explained. "You especially

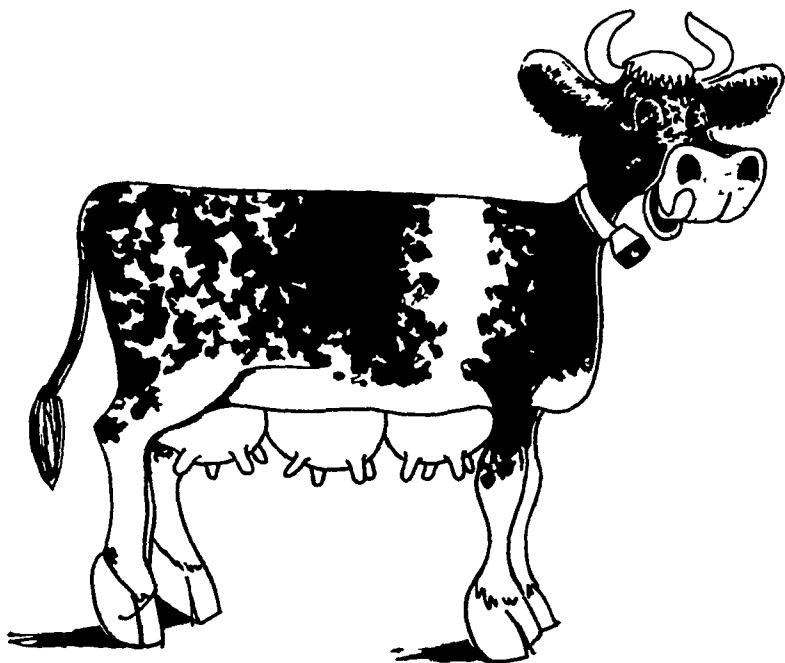
find a lot of corn planted after barley. We planted some corn in late June and early July. We're trying to see if we can get a variety that will stand up to late planting and still give us a respectable yield."

There is a lot of handwork involved in operating a corn breeding laboratory, and Edmondson has the hands of

30 local high school boys helping him every summer. They lop off tassles, cover female shoots with plastic bags to prevent them from being fertilized by stray pollen, then fertilize the shoots at the proper time with pollen taken from a particular plant. About half the youngsters come from area farms.

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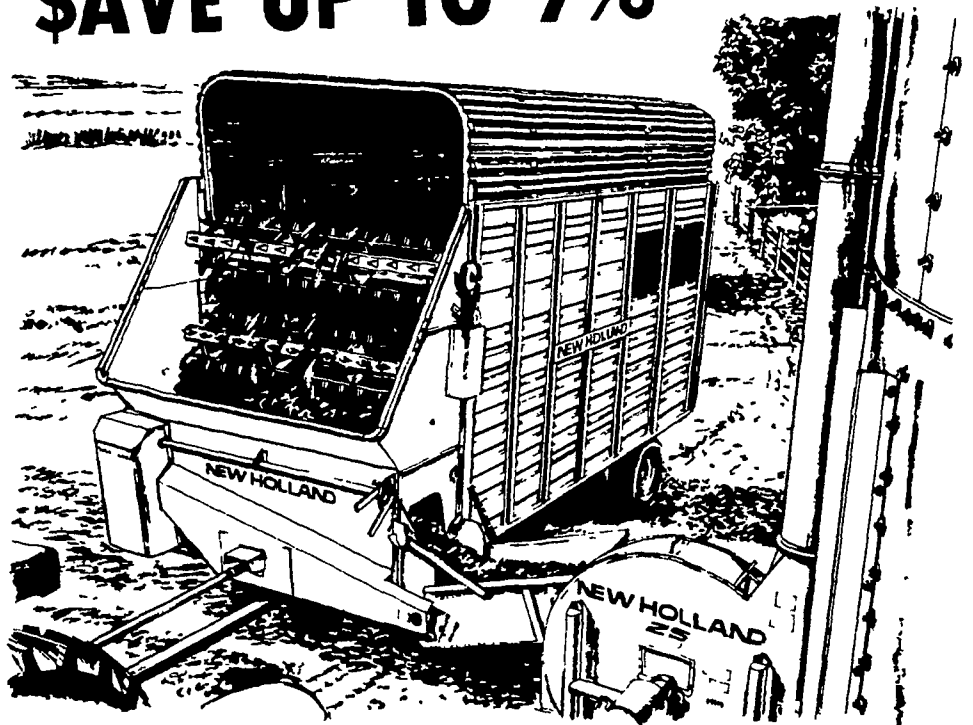
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