



John Hix, left, and Berks County Agent James Haldeman share a moment of mirth at the Rae Hix open house on Wednesday. John Hix, Rae's son, oversees the beef feeding on the family's diversified farm enterprise near Mohrsville.

## Crowd of 600 Attend Rae Hix Open House

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Angus are smaller than the Holstein and some other breeds used for beef. Because they are smaller, they reach their mature skeletal size sooner. And once an animal achieves 60 percent of its mature skeletal size, its protein needs change. An Angus or Hereford weighing 500 pounds or less needs from 12 to 14 percent protein in its ration. From 500 to 750 pounds, the animals can get along on 11 to 12 percent protein, and over 750 pounds, they will gain satisfactorily on a ration that is just 10.5 percent protein.

Burdette told the group that the proper ration was extremely important to the

cattleman's profit potential. "You can't afford to over-feed your animals, but you can't afford slow gainers, either," he said. "Last year, if you borrowed money to pay for feeders, your interest alone on each one of those animals was running 11 to 12-cents a day."

Non-protein nitrogen sources - chiefly urea - can be a big help to cattle feeders, Burdette said, although he did add that he doesn't recommend feeding NPN to cattle under 500 pounds. He said farmers should check their feed tags so they know for sure what they're getting in the supplements they buy. Many supplements, especially the LPS forms, are not good

sources of calcium.

Burdette told the group, too, that they should let the kind of feed they're using determine the kind of supplement they buy. A feeder using lots of corn silage would buy a high calcium low phosphorous supplement, while a farmer feeding lots of alfalfa hay or haylage would want a supplement with about equal parts of calcium and phosphorous.

Louis Moore told the group about the same story he's told other groups recently. "If you're lucky, you'll break even in the cattle business this year," he said. Moore feels that the spread between market cattle and feeders may widen a bit, but the corn

price would make buying even cheap feeders an expensive mistake.

"I'm not saying," the economist noted, "that no one should be feeding steers this year. I know a lot of you are locked in to feeding steers because you've got a lot of silage corn, and you've got the silos and the feedlots and you have to feed them. You can't take your silage down to the Philadelphia docks, so you've got to do something with it."

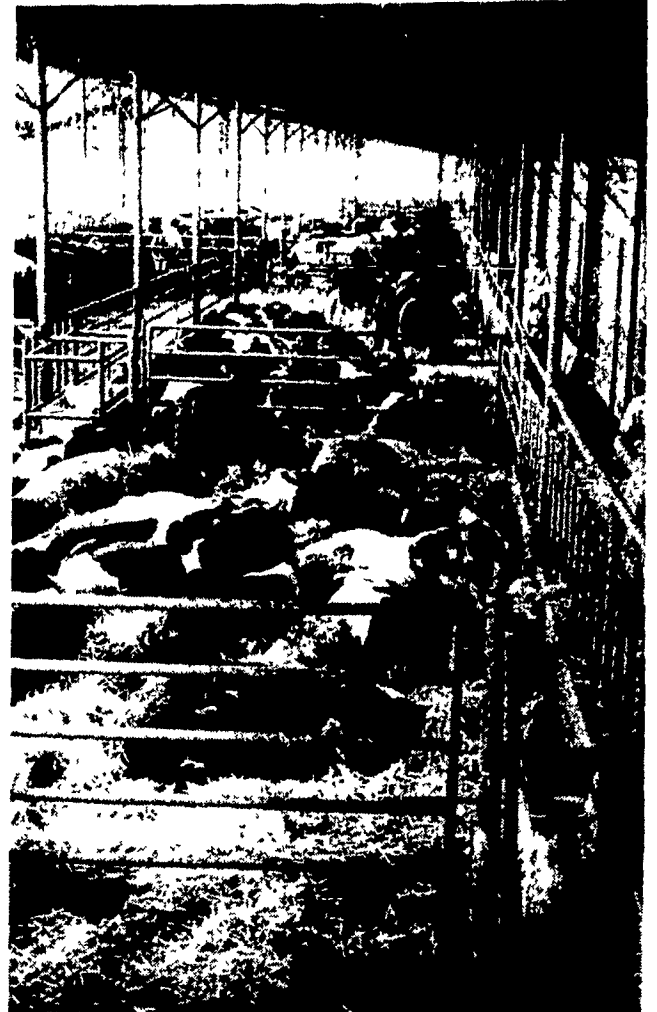
A primary cause for the slump in cattle feeding potential is the fact that the industry has been building inventories for the past five years. Moore said that even though feed lot numbers are down, there are still enormous herds of beef on grass ranges. He said the cattle herd now numbers around 138 million, up 20 percent in five years.

Many of these animals should be coming to the market in the months ahead, Moore predicted, as some cattlemen begin liquidating herds. He said western ranchers could be bringing a lot of cattle to market, especially if the quality of the grass ranges slips this fall.

On the subject of bull beef, Moore said last year was a good year because packers were looking for "anything on four legs". Conditions this year are not as good for the bull meat producer, and choice bulls are now selling for a good \$10 less than choice steers. He said he doesn't see much of a chance for bull beef prices to get back to the level of steer prices. He also said he sees a lean two to three years ahead for Pennsylvania cattle feeders.

Dr. Sam Guss took the podium after Moore to talk about the art of starting feeder calves. "You can spend all kinds of money on vaccines to cure diseases, but if you don't eliminate stress, you're still going to wind up with dead calves," Guss said.

"Another thing you have to remember is that all of the viral vaccines we have now are made from modified live



More than 300 dairy bull beef animals were on view here in the beef barn on the Rae Hix farm in Berks County. More than 600 visitors turned out for an open house tour of the Hix farm on Wednesday.

virus," he noted. "And if an animal is stressed after getting a live virus vaccine, it can still come down with the disease it was vaccinated against."

Poor ventilation is the primary cause of stress, Guss pointed out. Another source of stress is putting new calves in pens with watercups and no troughs, a condition which causes stress because new calves don't know how to use watercups. Guss also cautioned against giving too much grain to new calves because they can't digest it properly.

"Give those calves all the water they can drink when you get them home," Guss said, "and don't stir them up. To cure acidosis in calves that have just gotten off the truck, you can put baking

soda in their drinking water. Use one pound of soda to every 20 gallons of water, and you'll take care of the problem."

Other good ways to eliminate stress are to worm calves after they're eating well and controlling grubs and lice.

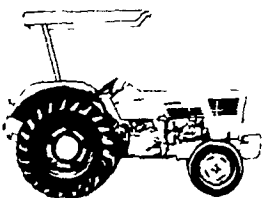
For home raised calves, Guss feels the best kind of feed is soured colostrum. "Take the first seven milkings from the calve's mother, put it in a clean plastic pail, keep it warm and covered, and you'll have enough colostrum to feed that calve until it's weaned," Guss said. The soured colostrum should be stirred every time it's fed, and it should be mixed half-and-half with water.

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