



Berks County Commissioner Vernon Shaffer, left, and County Agent James Haldeman were both busy Tuesday afternoon getting ready

for a Wednesday open house in the newly built Berks County Agricultural Center. Part of the \$1.5 million facility is seen behind the two men.

## Berks Co. Ag Center

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basement, which was designed for use as a government control center in emergency situations. As we descended into the building's

lower levels, Shaffer pointed to the ceiling, saying, "We've got special mats up there to absorb radiation. We're also protected by layers of concrete and steel.

We can withstand practically anything but a direct hit from an H-bomb." An entire life support system is incorporated in the basement, complete with

bunkrooms, shower rooms, emergency food rations and a kitchen.

Moving back upstairs, we viewed facilities for voting machine storage, bridge department work, a carpenter shop, what seemed like an acre of records storage - enough, at least, for 80 million documents - and spacious offices for Intermediate Unit No. 14, which oversees the operation of the County's school districts. There's also a large auditorium, at the front of which is an elaborate test and demonstration kitchen.

The Ag Center is situated on county property, across the road from Berks Heim, the county home. It sits, appropriately enough, amidst the four county farms, which have a total of 560 tillable acres.

"We do have things here in addition to farm offices, but this is still basically a commitment to agriculture by the county commissioners and all the people in the county," Shaffer said.

Haldeman pointed out that all farm groups in the county would be invited to use the facility. And he added that the center would not only serve farmers better, it would give the extension staff more time to solve problems. "We won't be spinning our wheels as much," he said, "making arrangements for meeting places, or traveling to a lot of different places. We hope to have most of our events held right here.

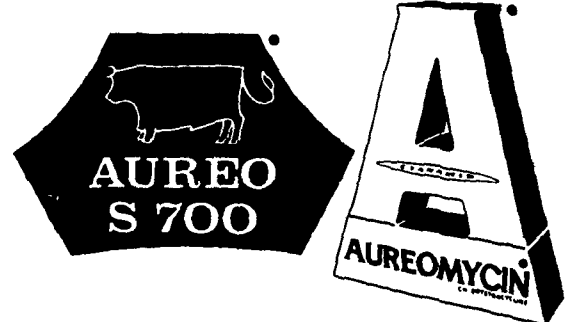
"The 4-H Clubs are going to build a center right in back of this building. They'll have a show ring for horse shows and a couple of pole buildings. They'll be holding a lot of their events right here, too."

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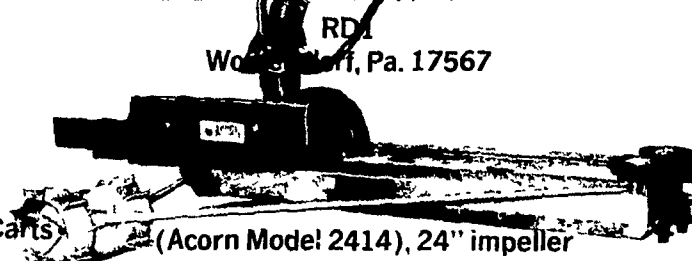


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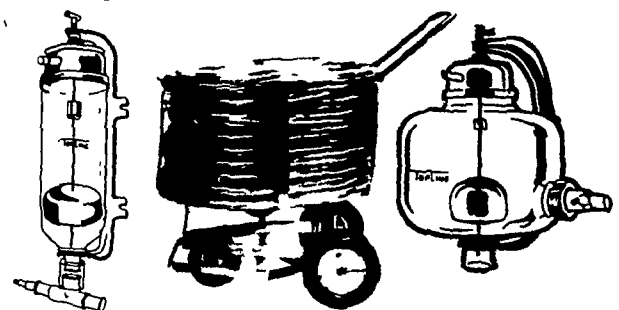
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