

Milk production problems studied

By DIETER KRIEG
 CONWAY, Ark. — In 1968 a major U.S. feed company set up a 1900-cow dairy farm near here for the purpose of researching dairy management and feed programs under practical, commercial conditions which could be applicable to most any herd size in the country. They had a lot to learn and readily admit this fact.

Encountering one problem after another — both natural and those due to miscalculated planning — the 802-acre research farm wasn't spared any of the difficulties normally associated with the dairy business.

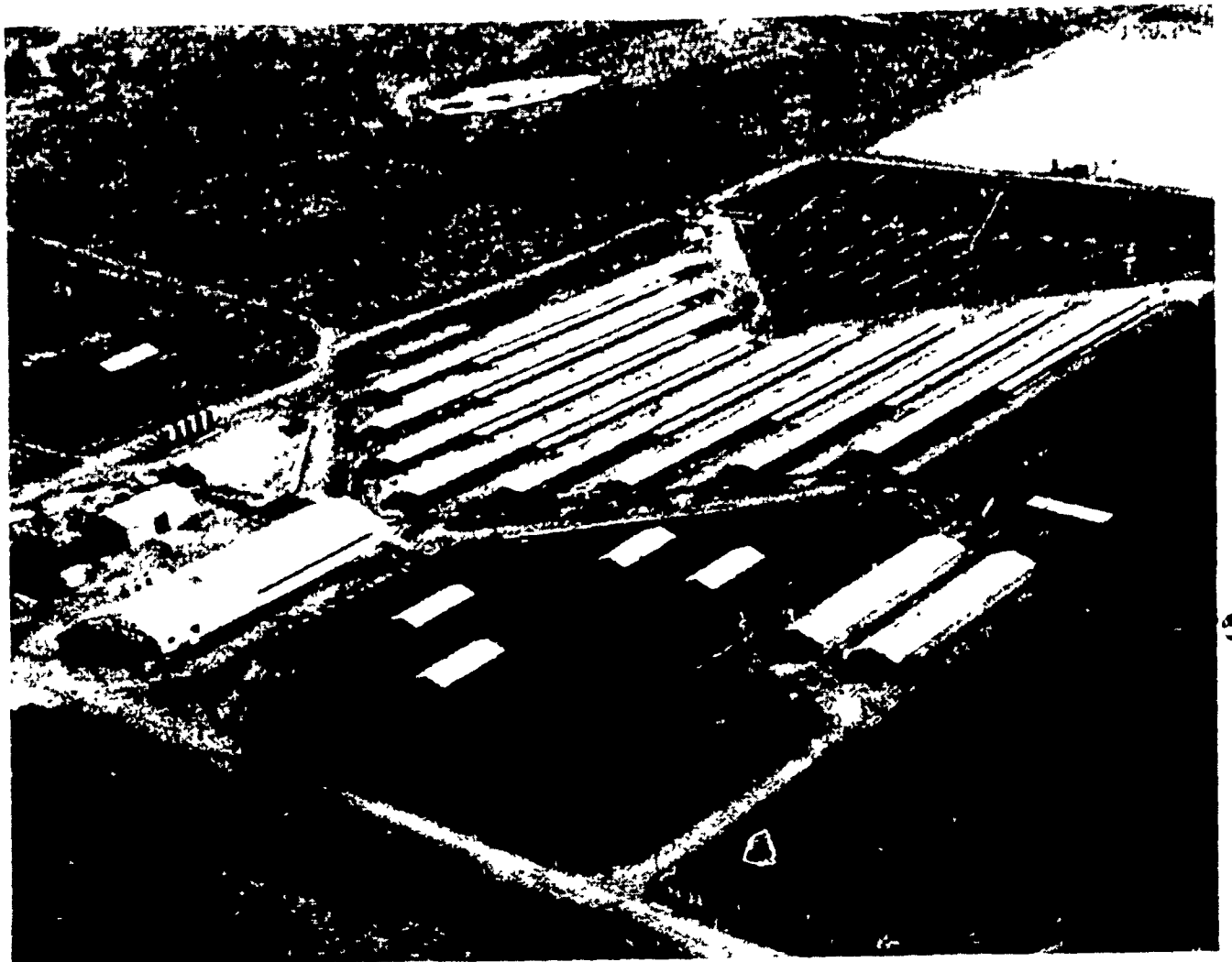
Among other problems, "Arkavalley Farm," owned by the Ralston-Purina Company, encountered levels of breeding problems, retained placentas, and herd deaths which are considered to be abnormally high. According to Purina dairy research scientist, Dr. J. P. Everett, the farm was encountering not just individual health problems, but herd health problems — much of it due to a certain amount of inexperience for this type of an endeavor. He and his associates willingly confess that if they had to do

change no less than seven major criteria. Currently the research farm has six major plans aimed at trying to make dairying everywhere more efficient and profitable.

Located in a rather unproductive part of Arkansas about 45 miles north of Little Rock, it must be pointed out that the Purina dairy research farm has far less good land to work with than dairymen back home in Pennsylvania. The site was chosen at the time because of a marketing agreement which had been signed with a nearby food distributor. Furthermore, the area was short on milk and the paying price for milk was attractive.

In spite of a seemingly negative footing, "Arkavalley" is being managed to produce at a profit. In fact, Purina spokesmen insist that the farm must be commercially viable, otherwise their experiences and research findings would not be truly applicable to other dairy farms. With progress being made in all directions, and mistakes leading to improved management, the research farm attempts to

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"Arkavalley Farm," located in central Arkansas, is a dairy research farm with emphasis on management. Although operated on a large commercial scale, most findings from the dairy are generally believed to be applicable to most herd sizes. Shown in this

panoramic view is the milking barn, left; with feed storage facilities and hospital barns off to the side. Eight open free-stall "barns" fan out from the rear of the milking and holding area. The smaller roof areas between those eight barns are over feed bunks. The entire area is

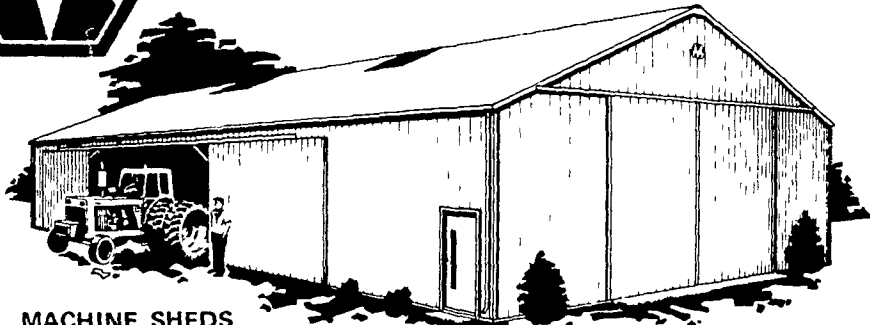
flushed with 160,000 gallons of water per day. The long buildings in the right foreground are used for calf raising. A national dairy conference sponsored by Ralston-Purina was held here this week with approximately 1,000 visitors from all over the East and Midwest in attendance.

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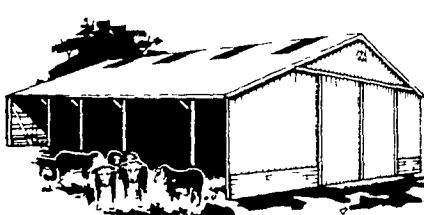
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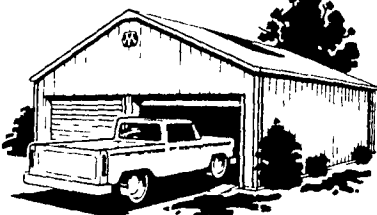
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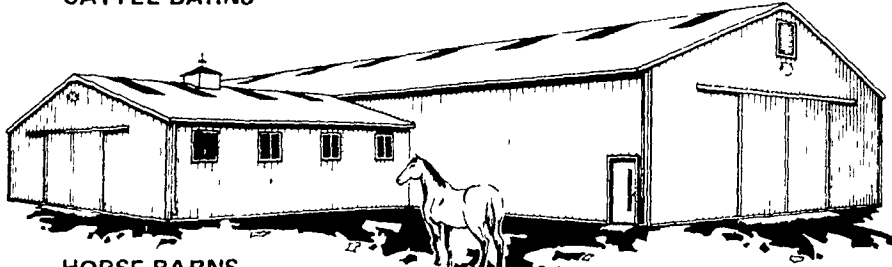
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