

## Solanco

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Dairy Judging Contest that year. In 1976 at the All-American Show in Harrisburg, high individuals for two breeds were from Solanco and the Solanco team placed sixth in the invitational contest. The team had placed fourth during FFA Week to qualify for the invitational. This Spring, placings at the Penn State Exposition included first place all-over team, first and third placed teams for reasons, second placed boy and second, third, and fourth placed individuals for reasons.

Solanco's Dairy Judging Team advisor, Dr. William Fredd states the club is successful because its members are persistent. They see and judge a lot of cows and work hard at improving their use of dairy type terminology. According to Fredd, young people with real determination to be students of dairy type can become successful judges.

A student who is especially interested in dairy animals, Dave Bitler, had read an article in Hoards Dairyman about a dairy club and suggested Steve Leiser, one of his teachers, that Solanco start a club of its own. After Bitler's suggestion, the first Solanco Dairy Club formed during the 1970-'71 school year with Leiser as its advisor.

Fredd, club advisor for the past five years, says the teaching program for the club has evolved to give the members plenty of exposure to judging dairy animals locally as well as in several states in the north-eastern section of the United States.

"Each year the club gets down to work after the Farm Show," says Fredd. From mid-January through mid-March, the club goes out to local herds for evening judging sessions. This year they judged at nine herds during that two months' time span.

The first two judging sessions are held at farms

within a few miles of the school so that after the judging is completed, the club members can return to the school where experienced members are paired with new ones to help the beginners write out reasons, stressing correct terminology and good logical explanations. Fredd points out that written reasons are soon de-emphasized after the basic format has been grasped by the new members. A judge should picture the animal in his mind and give reasons from that picture rather than memorize a list of written reasons, according to Fredd. He advises taking brief notes, organizing properly and using correct terms but not memorizing.

After a practice session or two, the individual scores are recorded and posted in the ag room at the high school.

"There is a great deal of interest generated by this. The members are competitive and want to improve their standing," he explains. "The club is open to anyone who is keenly interested in dairy judging; members do not have to belong to FFA, but when we select for the FFA Week, of course, only FFA members are eligible."

After the eight to 10 training sessions are over, usually in late March, the club members who have attended 80 per cent of the meetings are eligible to participate in the Spring dairy club tour. During the tour which is three or four days long, the club packs sleeping bags and food supplies into vans and trucks and travels to farms with outstanding herds representing all breeds. The purpose of the tour is to see and visit a number of outstanding dairy farms, see outstanding dairy cattle, and to become proficient dairy judges, capable of giving a good set of reasons.

In four days this Spring, the sixteen club members judged at nine different farms in eastern Pennsylvania and New



The 1977 dairy judging teams from Solanco High School who attended the Penn State Dairy Exposition are: (first place team seated left to right) Mary Bitler, Bruce Kreider, Tom Kirk, and

Sandy Schmuck. Standing is the second team from Solanco, which placed third in reasons. They are (left to right) Tina Bucher, Tim Hanks, Jeff DeLong, and Mike Rhoads.

York. When distance between farms permitted, the club judged a different herd each morning, afternoon and evening. If a student remains in the club for three years he will see herds from Virginia, New Jersey, Maryland, New York as well as Pennsylvania.

Scores are recorded from the Spring trip sessions and after the tour, the club membership is cut to twelve. Three more workouts are held locally and the club is reduced to eight members who make up the two teams which go to the Penn State Exposition. Based on results at the Expo, the team is then chosen for FFA Week competition.

"It's not that our boys or I should say members (about one-third are girls) are so much smarter than other teams. It's just that we work harder and see a lot more animals than do many other clubs," Fredd explained. "It takes a lot of time to study and practice. We wouldn't be

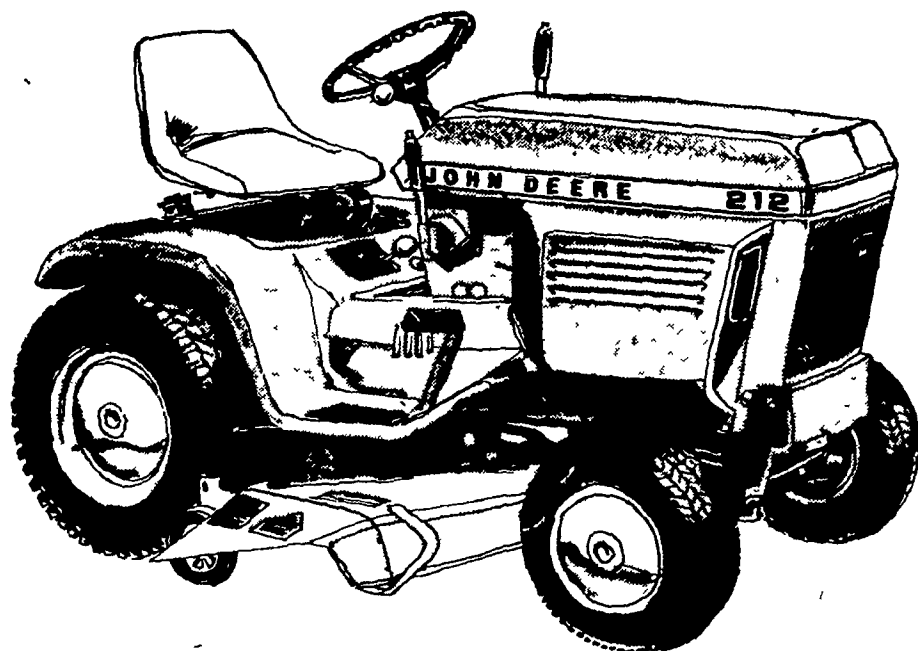
able to have so much experience if it weren't for local and regional dairymen who allow us to come to their farms to practice judging." It also takes parents who are willing to allow their children to devote so much time to this.

"There is a direct carryover to the people in

our community," this advisor explained. Some members go on to develop good herds of their own, others continue higher education in this field out of interest generated by the club and all members get a preview or overview of the dairy industry in the eastern United States, he added.

Solanco Dairy Club's success depends on determined students, willing parents, cooperative host dairymen, locally and regionally, and a well-organized program offering plenty of practice and stressing learning and constant improvement.

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