

A man and his cow, an unbeatable team

By JOYCE BUPP
Staff Correspondent

LANCASTER — A century ago, it was a time of more peaceful and simple days. Nearly everyone lived on, or was intimately familiar with, a farm.

Mass printed educational materials, and the technology of commonplace wireless communications, were still in the toddler stage. Farmers could not direct-dial a university specialist, or ring up the extension agent or young farmer advisor when they needed advice on a farming problem.

But there was one accepted voice of agriculture authority. It was a slim volume containing perhaps just a few dozen finely-printed pages. Its popularity and household usage probably ranked just below the Holy Bible, and maybe just one step above the mail-order catalog.

It was referred to simply as, "The Almanac."
In 1825, John Baer's Sons began printing an annual issue of the "Agricultural Almanac" at 12 North Queen Street in Lancaster. Baer's Almanac became a part of that heritage of tough farm stock that made Pennsylvania a leading agriculture state and, today, still publishes an annual issue of signs and sage advice for farmers.

While the volume's size has grown some, it still contains some of the same basic information, "carefully calculated for the Meridian of Pennsylvania and the adjoining states:" weather information, moon phases, astrological and astronomical details and a wealth of planting, livestock care, personal and moral habit suggestions, recipes and humorous anecdotes.

Dewey Frank of York, a memorabilia collector and flea market enthusiast, has acquired several volumes of Baer's Almanac, dating back over a hundred years ago.

The collection of volumes has won Dewey awards at the York Interstate Fair. He and the publishers of Baer's very generously offered to share their wealth of nostalgia with Lancaster Farming for this June Dairy Month look back at the dairying industry, a century ago, and beyond

THE MILCH COW

A cost-price squeeze on farm finances was evident in the 1800's, too, as farmers carefully weighed spending or trading for a good producing "milch" cow

In 1862, Baer's offered farmers this hypothetical comparison, "Which Is The Cheap Cow," of dairy animals: "... Suppose a man wishes to buy a cow. Two are offered him, both four years old, and which might probably be serviceable for ten years to come. With the same food and attendance the first will yield for ten months in the year an average of five quarts ... and the other for the same term will yield seven quarts and of equal quality. What is the comparative value of each? The difference in yield is six hundred quarts per annum. For the purpose of this calculation we will suppose it worth three cents per quart — amounting to eighteen dollars. Is not the second cow, while she holds out to give it, as good as the first, and three hundred dollars at interest besides? If the first just pays for her food and attendance, the second, yielding two-fifths more, pays forty per cent profit annually; and yet how many farmers having two such cows for sale would make more than ten, or twenty, or at most, thirty dollars difference in price? The profit from one is eighteen dollars a year — in ten years one hundred and eighty dollars, besides the annual accumulation of interest—the profit of the other is — nothing. If the seller has need to keep one, would he not be wiser to give away the first, than to part with the second for a hundred dollars?"

But, regardless of the price or the production, a mean-tempered cow at any time is no bargain. One of Baer's correspondents wrote to him of a sure way to check a cow's disposition, a method that had served the writer for 30 years.

He noted that if the crown, or tuft of hair on the cow's head, is two or three inches above the eyes, the animal would have a quiet and mild disposition. However, if the crown was two to three inches below the line of the eyes, the buyer should beware and avoid that individual

"Milch cows cannot be whipped or terrified into standing quietly, gently, and patiently during milking"

While buying techniques, like prices have changed in a century, the daily handling of animals, as recommended by Baer in 1863, under the heading "Kindness To Milch Cows," remains almost identical. "One of the greatest errors in overcoming cows that are unquiet while being milked, is to whip, beat, kick, and bawl at them. This is generally done, and the cow becomes afraid and angry, and instead of becoming better grows worse. Milch cows cannot be whipped or terrified into standing quietly, gently, and patiently during milking. They dislike to be milked, for they know that loud words and hard blows always attend the operation. They dread to see the milker as the little urchin dreads to see the birchen rod in the hand of an angry pedagogue when he expects to have it applied to his back. A cow, kindly and properly treated, is pleased to see the milker, gladly awaits his or her approach, and submits with pleasure to the operation of

being milked. . . . All animals control themselves, govern kindly under almost any pressure. They will learn that they are not to submit to the operation. Milking is done at regular hours, not varying from one to the other."

The author added to these instructions: "Laughing should be permitted. What would Baer's Almanac could hear the rock music blaring from the arm milking parlors?"

NOW LET'S
Feed for the family's few pretty much hand harvested products, luck and whatever harvest particular season or had months.

Referring to an article published in the Almanac, Baer's indicated that two per cent of her weight required three per cent. A sign indicated that "two cows may amount to one" that it would take to keep

"Two cows may be the same amount to keep three doing"

Prices quoted in the 1866 is twenty-five cents per head per



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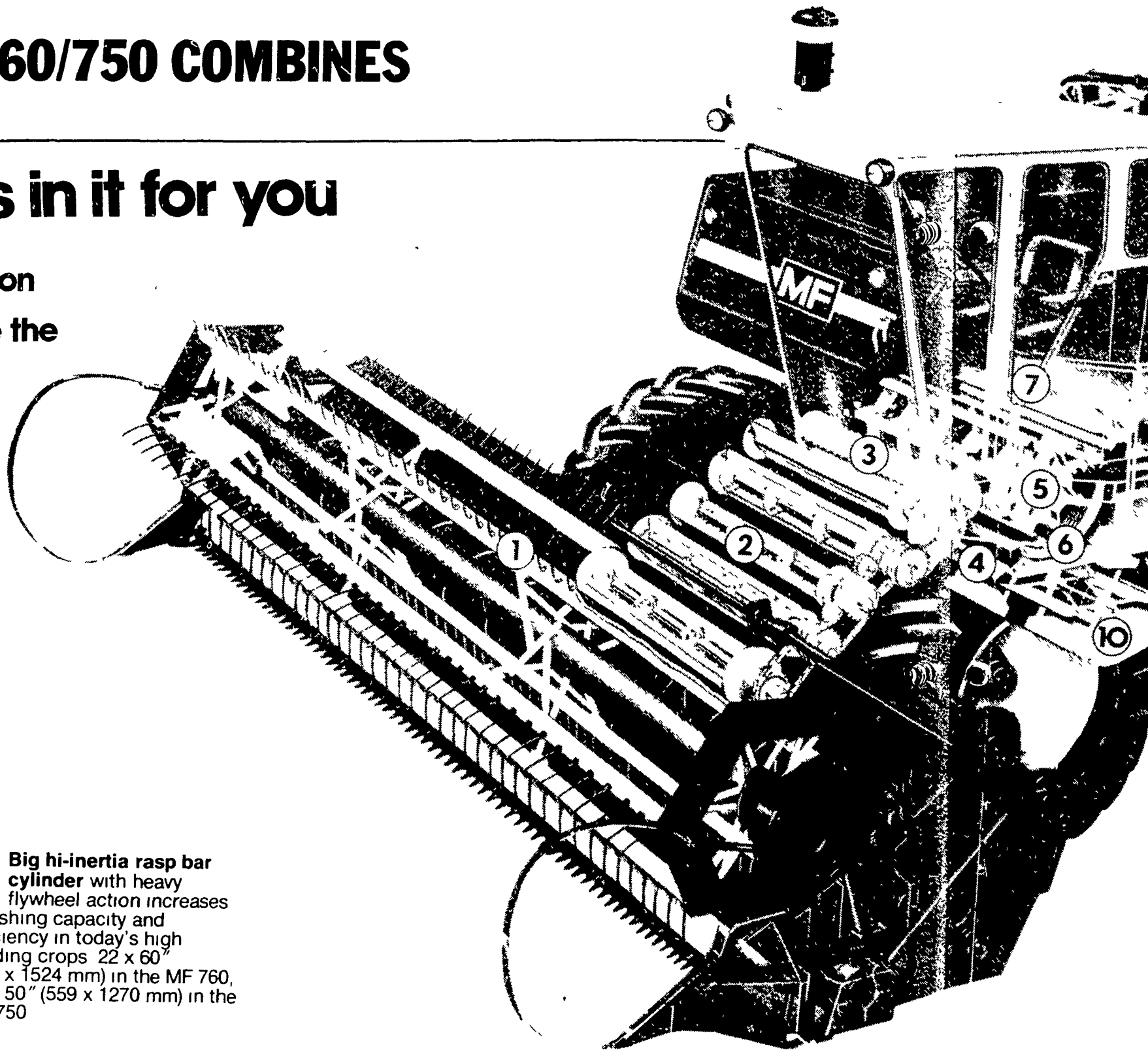
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