

# Lancaster Co. hosts beef tour

**BY SHEILA MILLER**  
LANCASTER — Over 160 cattlemen from three neighboring states attended beef cattle operation tour Lancaster County. Host, Max Smith, led the caravan of buses, carrying folks from New York, Delaware, and Maryland, in a swing trip around the

county. The first stop on the tour, sponsored by the Maryland Cattlemen's Association and the Lancaster County Extension Executive Committee, was the Greystone Manor Farms, Leola. From there, the cattlemen moved on, travelling the scenic highways of the

county to the only purebred Simmental operation in Lancaster. After a lunch and lecture on internal parasites in cattle (which wasn't an appetizer for most of the people), the company of beef feeders were off to Ephrata to take a look at the Glen and Barry Wissler operation.

Wrapping up the day, the buses pulled into Musser Ferry's farm, near Manheim, where neighboring states cattlemen saw how a farmer puts his chickens to work raising beef cattle. Take a gander at a "Closer Look at Lancaster County Beef".

## A closer look at Greystone Manor Farms

LEOLA — First stop on the tour was Mike Stoltzfus' Greystone Manor Farms. The visiting cattlemen remarked about the level land, beautiful farm buildings, and most of all, no rocks or stone fencerows. Harold Firestone and Pip Ravegum, filled the visitors on the details of their operation.

According to Firestone, the farm had 600 head of feeders on their 1000 head capacity feedlot. He added Ravegum, the farm's buyer, usually brought the cattle in 600 to 700 pounds and sold them at about 1200 pounds, making sure all the cattle are out by June each year. Ravegum stated they normally get their cattle from out West, usually Nebraska, but this year they bought the cattle in Virginia. He said their decision was based on the cost of freight to move the cattle to Lancaster.

The feeding regimen for the feeder steers at Greystone Farms has been developed by the farm's feed company and yields about 2 2½ pounds of weight gain per day.

For the first 3 days after the cattle arrive, they are fed ten pounds of corn silage plus 1½ pounds of protein supplement per head. From day 4 until the 115th day, the steers are given free choice corn silage plus 1½ pounds of protein per head.

Over the next 9 days, the managers decrease the corn silage fed, and at the end of 14 days the cattle are consuming five pounds per head per day of corn silage, plus free choice high moisture corn, along with the 1½ pounds of protein.

From then on until the time they are shipped off for slaughter, the steers are given free choice of high moisture corn, roughly three pounds per head per day, with five pounds of corn silage per head per day and free protein.

For the first 115 days, the farm managers estimated it cost about 42 cents per head per day, and thereafter, 92 cents per head.



As the tour buses approach Greystone Manor Farms, the visiting cattlemen were impressed by the level land, beautiful farm buildings, and most of all, no stone fence rows.



Greystone Manor's manure handling facility was one of the main attractions of the stop-over. The feed-lot manure is collected in a pit under these cattlemen's feet, and pumped out of a pipe seen in the background.

The protein, Firestone explained is supplied for 60 to 80 days by the haylage from the farm operation. After that time, the protein is supplied through commercial pellets.

Along with the planned out feeding program, Firestone explained they add sulfur to the water when the cattle first arrive at the farm. He said they also worm the

cattle with a five-day feed additive.

Firestone pointed out they do not use implants or mix any feed additives for growth. He said, "We couldn't handle Rumensin in all of the cattle, and we mix the cattle in the lots. We don't separate them by size."

The Greystone Manor feedlot also provided the visitors with some housing engineering ideas.

The feedlot was partially covered by roof, with the remainder of the concrete lot open. To keep the air circulating, a ventilation system was designed to take the ammonia-filled air out over the cattle through a type of air-sac.

Firestone remarked that one of the drawbacks of the ventilation system was the fact that birds always wanted to build their nests inside the air-sacs and caused them to clog.

The farm also featured a manure management system. At Greystone Manor, the manure from the feedlot is scraped to the far end of the lot where it is

collected in a large pit. The liquid manure is then pumped out on the farms 250 acres of corn land, which

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## A closer look at Beechdale Farms

BIRD-IN-HAND — The next stop on the tour was Beechdale Farms, which offered a scenic back-drop for the out-of state cattlemen.

Nestled back a tree-lined farm lane, the visitors stepped off the buses in front of a beautiful limestone home where they met Dr Thomas Conrad, the owner of Beechdale Farms.

The visitors were told by Conrad about his purebred Simmental operation. He boasted of having the first purebred calved east of the Mississippi in 1972.

His herd of 50 purebred cows was a long-term effort of selection of Swiss and French foundation sires and dams, which meant sometimes crossing the U.S. to find the best females.

His herd building story



Glen Wissler took the loading chute and portable mike to tell the cattlemen about his feedlot and farming operation near Ephrata.

## A closer look at Wissler Farms

EPHRATA — After a short rest and lunch where the cattlemen heard from a company representative on parasite control in feedlot animals, the tour got back on the road and headed north.

The next stop on their itinerary was the farm of Glen and Barry Wissler. This was still another type of cattle operation for the visitors to evaluate.

The Wissler's have a father-son partnership, where together they farm 225 acres of their own land, plus an additional 100 rented acres.

Their crops program includes 250 acres of corn, 30 acres of wheat, and the remainder in soybeans.

The soybeans are used as a protein supplement for their feed-lot operation after it is dried and ground. The Wisslers put up 90 to 100 acres of corn silage and about 90 acres of high moisture corn in special silos.

Glen Wissler, the father, told the group they feed out about 400 head of steers every year. Their barn facility has a maximum limit of 450 to 475 head.

The cattle are brought in at 812 pounds, according to Wissler, and are trucked to Ephrata primarily from Virginia.

Their feeding program consists of feeding free choice silage, with 1½ pounds of protein from October until February. Then the cattle are given 5 pounds of grain per head every day.

This feeding program continues until May, when the cattle are marketed, weighing about 1200 pounds.

Wissler said he is a firm believer in worming the animals, but he only worms after a veterinarian advises him to based on a manure sample.

His health program also includes adding trisulfa to the water when the steers are moved into the feedlot, and he feeds them only hay for 10 days to lessen the risks of shipping fever. He pointed out he does not vaccinate or implant the steers for fast weight gains.

Along with their cattle, the Wisslers raise hogs, crossing Yorkshires, Hampshires, and Durocs. They keep around 100 gilts and sell their feeder pigs to a nearby farmer.

When asked if they ever received any complaints about their farming operation from the new homes built across from the farm, Wissler smiled and said "No, because we sold them the lots."

saw Beechdale Farms buying 135 females in 22 states and in 5 Canadian provinces.

In the early years, Conrad admitted to a lot of calving troubles, poor conception rates and too much turnover in his herd. But now, he stated he has a closed herd, with his replacement heifers coming from his own cows.

To help in calving, Conrad told the group he uses a closed circuit television to keep an eye on the cows. This was brought about by so many of the calves having to be pulled in the farm's early years.

His Simmental calves, cows and bulls are kept on a records management system to help in selecting the best animals to keep, breed, or sell. The 205 day adjusted weaning weight for

his calves is 660 pounds for the bull calves and 580 pounds for the heifers.

Conrad also pointed out that his herd is 50 percent polled, noting that in Simmentals the polled animals are considered inferior to those that are horned.

In his breeding program, Conrad said they breed their heifer calves at 13 to 14 months of age. These heifers then calve when they are 22 months old.

For sires, Conrad breeds most of his cows to the Simmental bulls known as Signal, Galant, and Beat, with seven other bulls used to service the remaining cows in his herd.

The breeding is done by artificial insemination, he said, in order to use the best

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Harold Firestone, left, and Pip Ravegum told the 50 visitors about their feedlot and cattle operation.