

Broilers teach

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Ten days later they vaccinated them. And on April 25, the students got up at 1 a.m. to catch and deliver the finished broilers to Millsboro for processing.

All but 250 of these were sold to the processor. The rest (500 halves) were brought back to Newark and barbecued the next day for sale during Ag Day - an annual student-sponsored community event at the college.

During the grow-out operation Tschantre, an agricultural engineering major, monitored temperature and ventilation systems as part of a special problem he undertook for academic credit. For this he recorded variations in temperature, humidity, and ventilation rate. Twice a week he also took litter samples from several parts of the house and tested these for nitrogen and moisture content.

Purpose of this special problem was to determine what conditions inside a

broiler house cause release of nitrogen from fecal material into the air as ammonia gas. Ammonia is a critical problem in the field because of its negative effect on broiler performance.

Data collected by Tschantre may give researchers in the department of agricultural engineering a better idea of the way environmental conditions must be managed in order to reduce ventilation costs.

This first student venture in the new house received a lot of industry help. Chicks were donated by Purdue, Inc.; feed was provided at less than cost by Southern States; and Townsends, Inc., provided the processing for a nominal fee. Beyond that, a lot of other industry money went into providing the facility itself.

The 2200-bird house was built last Winter with funds provided by a \$6,000 grant from the Merck Company Foundation. Construction was done at cost by Sam Yoder and Sons, Greenwood

builders specializing in farm structures. The bulk feed bin, auger type feed systems, automatic watering troughs, brooder stoves, fans and other equipment were donated by Bunting and Bertram, a Frankford dealership.

Now that the new facility has had a trial run, it will be used to teach an undergraduate course in poultry management in the department of animal science and agricultural biochemistry.

Meckley and other faculty members feel that the teaching unit can greatly increase student interest in poultry production at Delaware. "I see the house as providing an opportunity for students to learn poultry management and at the same time gain an appreciation of the economics of farming," he says.

At least half of those involved in the recent AZ project were animal science majors. But though a few had had some experience raising chickens on a farm, none had had previous exposure to a commercial

type broiler operation.

"We get a lot of students in the college now from urban backgrounds," explains Meckley. Now they'll have a chance to work directly with birds under actual production conditions.

"You can grow a broiler from day one to processing in just seven to eight weeks - a perfect time block for a 12-14 week semester. This permits students to do advance planning, produce and sell the birds, and still be able to evaluate the results."

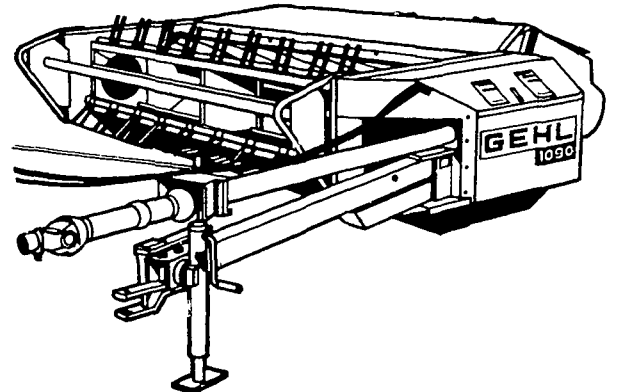
"This makes it a tremendous learning opportunity. And there's always a chance for more individual special problems like Tschantre's."

One reason for all the generous industry support for the new teaching unit, of course, is the fact that it can provide much needed practical experience for young people who may later seek jobs in poultry production. This increases their value as employees at the same time that it increases their own competitive advantage in the job market.



Students prepare to vaccinate first flocks of chicks to be raised in U of D's new teaching broiler house. The Newark facility will be used to teach poultry management.

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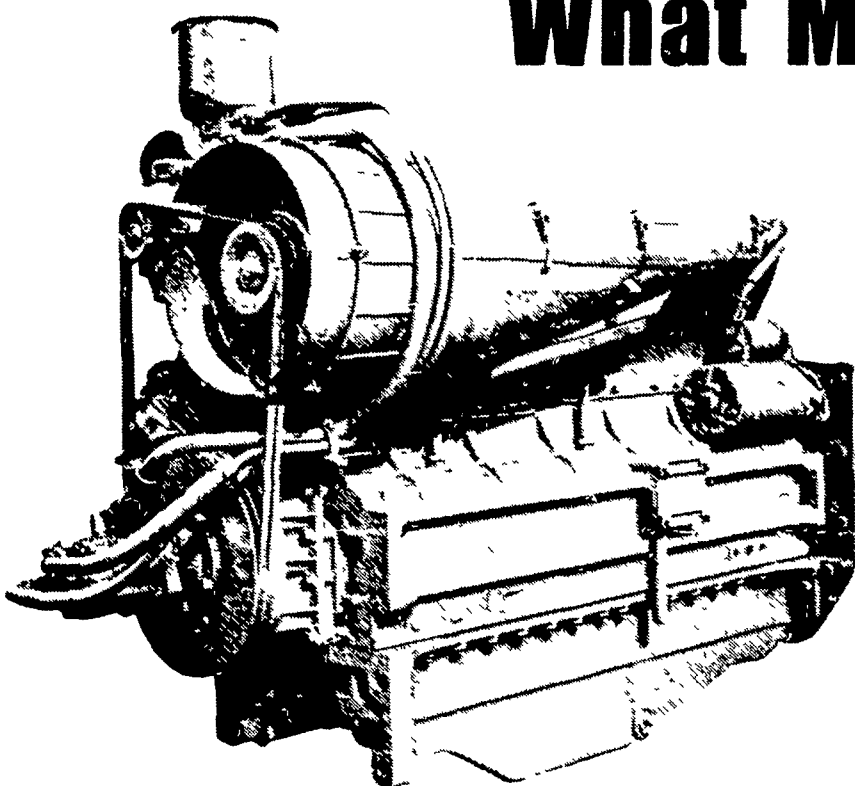
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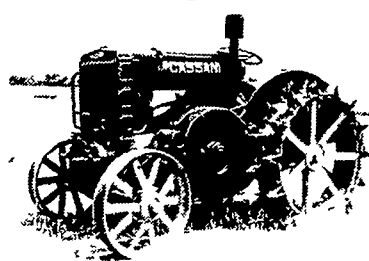
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