

Bill introduced to help young farmers

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Terming the young, beginning farmer "an endangered species" Congressman Berkley Bedell Thursday introduced legislation designed to assist the young farmers in acquiring the necessary resources to purchase their own farms.

Bedell's bill the Beginning Farmers Assistance Act of 1981, authorizes the Secretary of Agriculture, following certain guidelines, to provide Federal Loan guarantees in support of direct loans made by the states under state programs to assist farmers seeking to purchase a family farm.

According to Bedell, this bill is intended "to encourage the states to establish their own programs to provide loans or other incentives to beginning farmers who wish to purchase their own farms."

In addition, the Bedell bill is structured to dovetail and supplement, rather than duplicate, beginning farmer assistance programs in states, like Iowa, which already have such legislation. The bill will also augment efforts of the Farmers Home Administration to provide loans to beginning farmers.

Bedell, in his statement accompanying the introduction of the legislation, quoted U.S. Department of Agriculture statistics which show that "69.5 percent of all farmland is owned by farmers age 50 or older, farmers who will be retiring throughout the 1980's. Only 5.9 percent of the total far-

mland acreage is owned by farmers age 35 and under."

"If present trends continue," said Congressman Bedell, a member of the House Agriculture Committee, "as older farmers retire, their land will be sold primarily to existing farmland owners who will consolidate their holdings, thus increasing average farm size and limiting the number of total farms and farmers."

Citing a survey taken in 15 key agricultural counties in his Northwest Iowa congressional district, Bedell continued, "Farmers who own and operate their land were found to be a minority of land owners in every county surveyed."

"Anywhere from just 23 to up to 44 percent of the farmers were found to be actual owner-operators. Also, from 58 to 77 percent of the farmland in these counties was found to be owned by absentee landlords."

"Clearly, if beginning young farmers do not have the resources to acquire a farm during the critical next several years when many older farmers will be leaving the land, our farming system will become a system dominated by giant farms controlled by absentee landlords who may have less and less regard for the welfare of our rural communities and our rural way of life," said the lawmaker.

"We must take steps to assure that we seize upon this impending transition period in farmland ownership as an opportunity to reaffirm our support for family farms and family farmers," Bedell said.

PSU livestock show to run April 25

UNIVERSITY PARK — Show Day for the Little International Livestock Exposition at the Penn State Beef and Sheep Center is April 25.

Fitting and showing contests will start at 8 a.m. with beef cattle and sheep, followed by hogs and horses. The Penn State Block and Bridle Club will host the event.

Several weeks before Show Day students "draw lots" for their animals and fit and train them. Contestants compete for awards. A grand champion showman is chosen and prizes are awarded at the Little "I" banquet that evening.

Other honors that will be given are the Outstanding Alumnus, and the Glen R. Kean award.

Admission to the show is free and the public is cordially invited to attend the day's activities.

Students in animal production, with knowledge of showing the respective species, are selected as superintendents to help students with their animals. This year's superintendents are Dale Rains of Mercer for beef; Linda Ebaugh of Delta for sheep; Lee Johnson of New Alexandria for swine; and Rich Denniston of Pittsburgh for horses.

Judges for the contest are Chester Hughes of Portage for beef cattle; Robert Zimmerman of New Concorde, Ohio for sheep; Keith Bard of Lewistown for swine; and

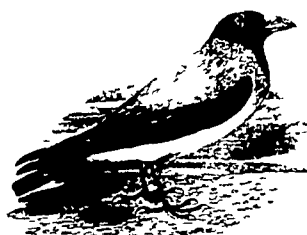
Nancy Kohler of McKean for horses.

The Show manager is Jeff Bylerly of Milton, a senior in animal production. Assisting him is Robert Bortz of Apollo, a junior in animal production.

Harold Harpster of the Department of Dairy and Alumni Science is faculty advisor for the Block and Bridle Club.

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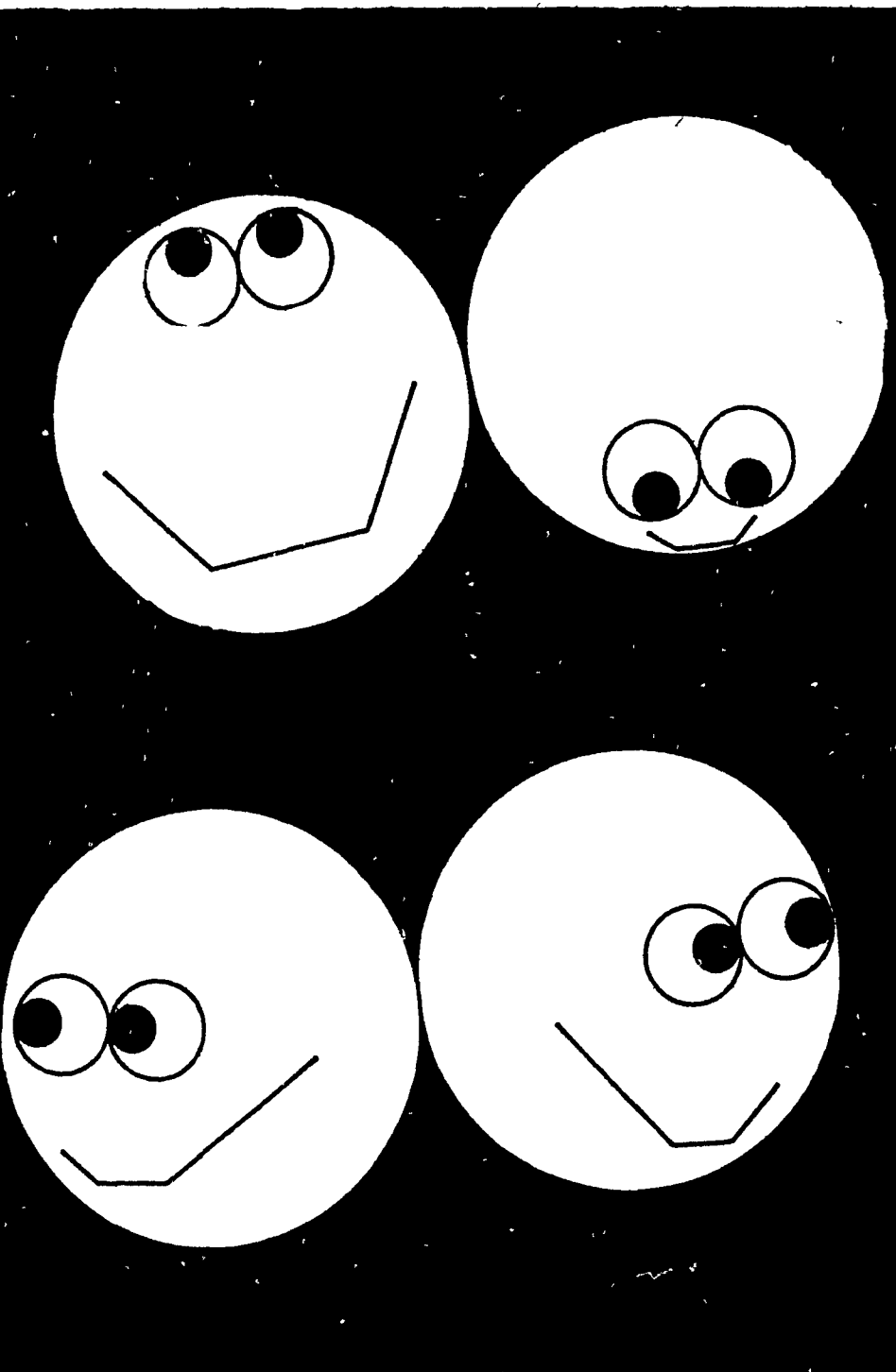
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