

Dekalb swine crossing complex is raised in

BY SHEILA MILLER
REINHOLDS — The most recent addition to the string of Dekalb swine crossing farms scattered across the country has been constructed in Lancaster County.

The 500 sow farrow-to-finish complex was open for public scrutiny yesterday for the first and last time. Once the breeding swine move in next month, the complex will be a closed environment to allow maximum disease control, and visitors will be carefully screened.

The complex, which will be populated with Dekalb foundation stock from Illinois, is owned by a corporation of local farmers and businessmen known as Middle Creek Swine Breeders, Inc. The fourteen-member corporation includes: Ezra Good, Fivepointville, president; Eugene Martin,

Reinholds, vice president, Paul Weaver, Farmersville, treasurer; George Christianson, Lebanon, secretary, Leon Hoover, Myerstown; Robert Graybill, Lancaster; James Martin, Lebanon; Robert Martin, Terre Hill; Aaron Horst, Terre Hill; Titus Weaver, Ephrata; Elmer Martin, Ephrata; Dr. Edward Zobian, Reading; Lloyd Good, Denver; and Leon Kurtz, Ephrata.

According to Larry Horst, a spokesman for the corporation, replacement gilts raised at the complex will be ready for placement into local swine herds by July and August of next year. The corporation anticipates marketing 2,500 selected breeding gilts each year.

Only half of the gilts farrowed in the house will be 'earmarked' for potential breeding animals. The

final selection of which gilts make the grade will be decided by a representative from Dekalb Swine Breeders, from Dekalb Illinois. All unselected gilts and barrows will be shipped to Hatfield Packing as market hogs.

For every gilt selected by Dekalb as replacement stock, Middle Creek Swine Breeders, Inc. will receive a premium, reported Horst, who added there is a potential market for about 2,000 replacements to meet the needs of local farms.

"Previously, the closest Dekalb crossing farm was located in North Carolina. That meant trucking costs and stress to the hogs," he said. "Now, farmers can buy a local pig and better quality replacement."

Managing the total confinement facility will be the responsibility of

a Penn State graduate Lawrey Sayer, a native of Maryland. Sayer is presently managing a 1000 sow Dekalb herd in Kansas.

The complex's building was designed by Dekalb and Farmer Boy Ag, Myerstown. It is their first 'shower-in, shower-out' facility to offer both a men's and women's shower.

Each farrowing room features 20 narrow farrowing crates of European design that provide an 18 inch clearance inside and a bottom rail clearance of 30 inches.

"This design keeps more pigs alive," explained Horst, "because it forces the sow to lie down and get up more slowly — she avoids crushing her pigs."

The crate's design also has the side bars bowed out to allow the sow to lay over completely. This permits her total underline to be exposed to the nursing pigs.

From farrowing to gestation, the breeding swine dine and drink out of concrete troughs. Fresh water flows through the troughs constantly except during feeding. This concept has the advantages of keeping pens drier, requiring less maintenance and wasting less feed, stated Horst.

The sows are fed automatically in the gestation room, but are hand fed in the six farrowing rooms. Those sows that are automatically fed have their own adjustable feed boxes which can be set to dump from 0-7 pounds of feed in front of each sow.

The automatic feeders allow the facility's manager more time to observe the sows. They also reduce the stress and screaming in the herd since all the hogs are fed at once, explained Horst.

Woven wire flooring has been installed in the farrowing rooms and nursery, and in the backs of

the pens in the gestation rooms. These woven floors allow manure to drop down into pits which are flushed out continuously.

Middle Creek's manure system is the first of its kind to be installed in a farrowing operation in the East, noted Horst. The Lissco system incorporates an aerated lagoon with a solids separator.

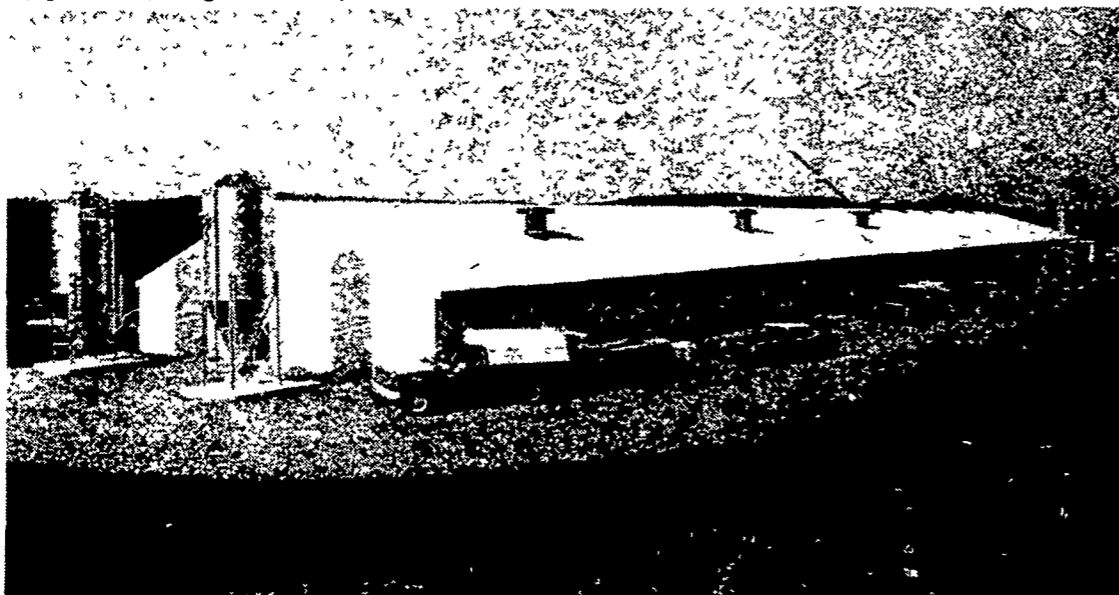
Manure collected in the pits is flushed to the separator where the solids are extracted and the waste water is piped out to the lagoon. The solids will be fed to beef cattle in a corporation member's feedlot, according to Horst who claims it "comes out like silage."

"The manure from the separator is 70 percent moisture. This manure either has to be dried or used within 48 hours. We plan to feed it at 70 percent moisture and add nutrients and protein to the cattle's diets," he said, noting an analysis of 'wastage' measured 14 percent protein.

The waste water that is stored in the lagoon will be irrigated onto croplands once a year. The rest of the year, daily aeration of the water is claimed to eliminate odor and balance the acids in the waste water, along with stabilizing the nitrogen and neutralizing bacteria.

Before the waste water is sprayed onto the crops, it will be reused to flush the manure pits at the rate of 100,000 gallons a day. Horst claimed there is no problem with recycling disease along with the waste water, and the continuous flow of water through the pits means "no gas, no dust, and no odor."

The lagoon also is the 'catch basin' for excess fresh water that flows through the troughs and the pen wash-down water. This adds up to an additional 20,000 gallons of water per day.



Work crews put the finishing touches on the 500 sow Dekalb crossing complex early this week in preparation for the Middle Creek Swine Breeders, Inc. open house, held yesterday. The new complex is situated along Route 897 in northern Lancaster County, west of Reinholds.

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