

# Scenes from Missouri

## Cowplex Dairy lives up to its name

BY SALLY BAIR  
Staff Correspondent

GREENWOOD, Mo. — Milking cows 14 hours a day may not be your idea of a good time, but at Cowplex Dairy, Greenwood, Missouri, that's what it takes to milk 426 cows twice daily, from beginning to clean-up. Milking begins at 11:30 a.m. and 11:30 p.m.

Cowplex is a family corporation owned by Mrs. James A. Reed and Son, David, with the present Cowplex facilities built in 1968 to consolidate three dairies into one. Originally facilities were designed to accommodate 600 milking cows, but the smaller number seems to be optimum.

There is construction underway to replace the eight-stall-by-pass parlor with a double eight herringbone. The new parlor will feature automatic take-offs, flush tanks, back-flush sanitation, feed bowl covers, crowd gate, pre-cooling and energy converters.

The rolling herd average for Cowplex is 15,000 pounds of milk and 540 pounds of fat on WADAM.

Greg Lasser, a Kansas State graduate who is herdsman in charge of herd health and breeding discussed the operation with

visitors attending the convention of the National Association of Animal Breeders two weeks ago.

Lasser explained that feeding consists of a total mixed ration. Corn and wheat silage are the main forages along with alfalfa hay and alfalfa haylage. Lasser says everything is fed outside and grain is blended according to the production of each group.

The cows are divided into five groups - super cows, fresh cows, mid-lactation cows, late-lactation cows and dry cows. Lasser explained that super cows and fresh cows are bred artificially, with a "clean-up" bull being used on the mid-lactation cows, including those not yet diagnosed pregnant and greater than 80 days fresh.

Production enters into the grouping arrangement, with some higher producing cows kept in the AI group or a cow diagnosed pregnant being kept in a higher producing group.

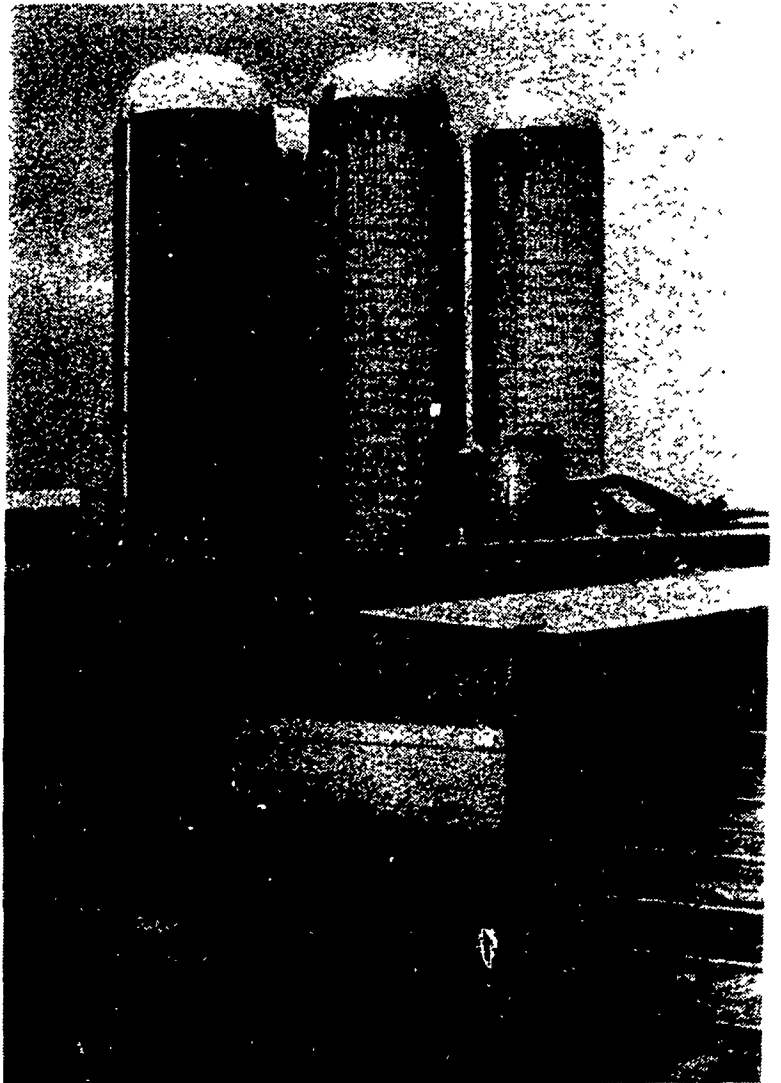
Detecting heat in such a large number of cows requires some effort, and Lasser said that in the AI group heat detection is assisted by cows treated with testosterone propionate and equipped with a chin-ball marker. These are cows

which would have been culled normally for being open, but are in good physical condition with good feet and legs. Conception rate is estimated at 60-65 percent when the heat and humidity are "bearable." Every cow is bred at least once with AI before being moved to a group with bulls.

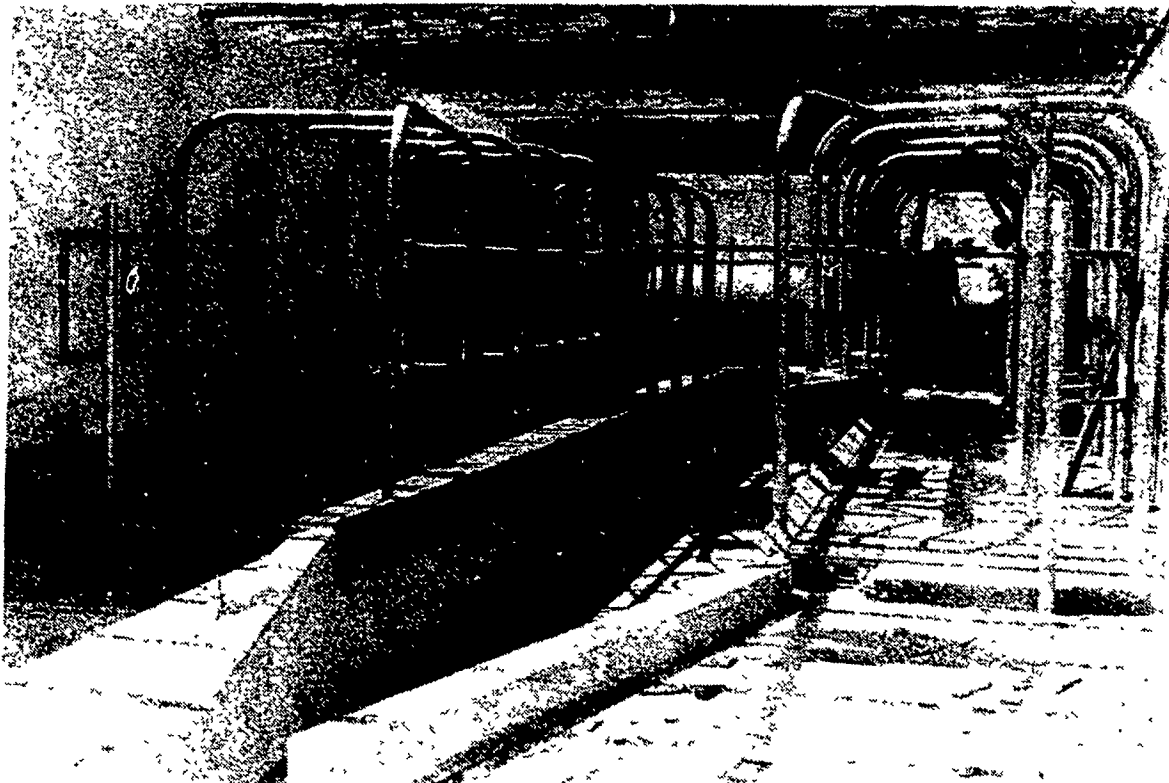
Lasser said they try to do all breeding between 8 a.m. and 12 noon, which is also when there is space available for breeding. He said they try to dry off cows between 45 and 60 days pre-partum.

With 12 full time employees at Cowplex, they raise their own alfalfa as well as wheat and corn silage. They raise oat hay for heifers and brome hay for dry cows. This year's crops consists of 400 acres of corn, 500 acres of wheat, 300 acres of beans, 200 acres of alfalfa and 200 acres of grass hay, with some double cropping. The wheat acreage is about 200 acres above normal because of being "burnt out" in the drought last summer. Most of the grain used is purchased in a complete feed.

Forage testing is done when filling and periodically as it is fed. Lasser said a nutritionist works



This is a view of the open housing and silos at the Cowplex Dairy at Greenwood, Missouri. This large dairy is milking 426 cows, grouped according to production and stage of lactation.



The new milking parlor on the Cowplex Dairy is still under construction.

regularly with them.

Cowplex raises all their own replacement heifers and will be changing to raising them in calf hutches.

In 1977, Cowplex built a solids manure separation system to help lessen the solids load on their lagoons. It allows them to process manure in all weather and, after a heating process, to use solids for bedding and freestalls. Some of this product is also merchandised.

A herd of this size could be faced with many problems, but Lasser says the biggest current problem is feet primarily because the wet weather has not allowed them to turn out as much as they normally would. To help care for all those feet and legs, a hoof trimmer comes at regular six month intervals.

When questioned about the financial end of the operation,

Charles Dittmer, farm manager, explained that the dairy and the farm are two distinct operations. Consequently he said some years one part of the operation may do better than the other. He added, "For the last five years the dairy business was a good one to be in."

Cowplex received \$13.27 for 3.5 milk in June. They ship to Mid-American Dairymen, Inc., with milk hauled each morning from the 4,000 gallon bulk tank.

Milkers are paid about \$1,100 to \$1,200 a month, with about \$750 to \$800 of that in salary and the rest in benefits, including housing, full hospitalization and others.

Cowplex is not typical of Missouri dairy farms in that it is a much larger operation. Nevertheless, it is an example of a well-managed herd meeting the challenges of dairying on a large scale.

## Shrout Brothers enjoy family operation

INDEPENDENCE, MO. — The spread of suburbia is a problem shared by farmers in many parts of the country and Shrout Brothers Dairy in Independence, Missouri, is no exception.

Located just outside a rapidly expanding Independence, they are in an area of high loss of land to housing. Many of their neighbors have responded to urbanization by bottling their own milk but Shrout Brothers ships their milk to Mid-America Dairymen, Inc. They take advantage of their closeness to people by selling a lot of manure to city farmers and for gardening. They also enjoy a low price for milk hauling.

Shrout Brothers is a family operated unit consisting of Charles and DeWitt Shrout, twin brothers, and Charles's three sons, Charles Jr., David and Norris. David and Norris are responsible for the field work, and Charles Jr., manages the dairy herd. Charles Jr. ex-

plained the operation to a group of visitors from the convention of the National Association of Animal Breeders, being held in Kansas City.

The Holstein and Brown Swiss herd has a rolling herd average of 1400 pounds of milk and 500 pounds of fat. They are milked in a double 14 herringbone parlor with automatic take-off units. Three people work in the parlor and milk 300 cows in two hours.

Grain is fed according to production levels of individual cows, with 180 of the herd on a computerized feeding program using six stations. The Ration-master can feed up to five pounds an hour, up to a pre-determined limit for each cow, and a printout at the end of the day will tell how much each cow ate. The feeding record can also point to illness or indicate when a cow is in heat, according to Shrout. He admits there are some bugs to be worked

out of the system.

The Shrouts purchase a 16 percent complete feed, but Shrout noted, "We can grind feed if we want to." Currently they are paying \$169 a ton for feed, including delivery. They also feed corn silage and chopped alfalfa grass hay, grinding the hay in a tub grinder.

The family farms 3000 acres of land, in parcels of varying size, with 100 acres of alfalfa and brome grass, 800 acres of wheat, 400 acres of corn, 300 acres of soybean and 500 acres of pasture. They do all their own field work with two full time and four part time helpers in addition to the family. The land, Shrout says, is "worth more than you can afford to farm."

Milk is picked up by Mid-America daily from the two 1500 gallon tanks they use. They are paying \$.30 hauling charge per hundred.

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This is a totally computerized feeding system which allows a cow to eat up to five pounds at a time up to her total pre-determined limit. A printout lists the total amount eaten by the cow.