

## A.I. technician breeds 100,000th cow

**NICKEL MINES** — When Robert McDowell told a farmer last week that he had bred his 100,000th cow, the farmer said, "That's a lot of cows." McDowell smiles as he relates the story and says, "I had to agree."

McDowell is a technician for Atlantic Breeders Cooperative and is the first employee to reach the 100,000th first service mark in the Cooperative's 38-year history. While McDowell is modest about the accomplishment, he does acknowledge, "It is a milestone in a technician's career."

McDowell has been with Atlantic Breeders for 33 years and is a man who is comfortable with his job. He says, "I like the job. It's been good to me." What he likes best about it is meeting people throughout the day. "They are my friends," he says, "It is a little more than just a business relationship."

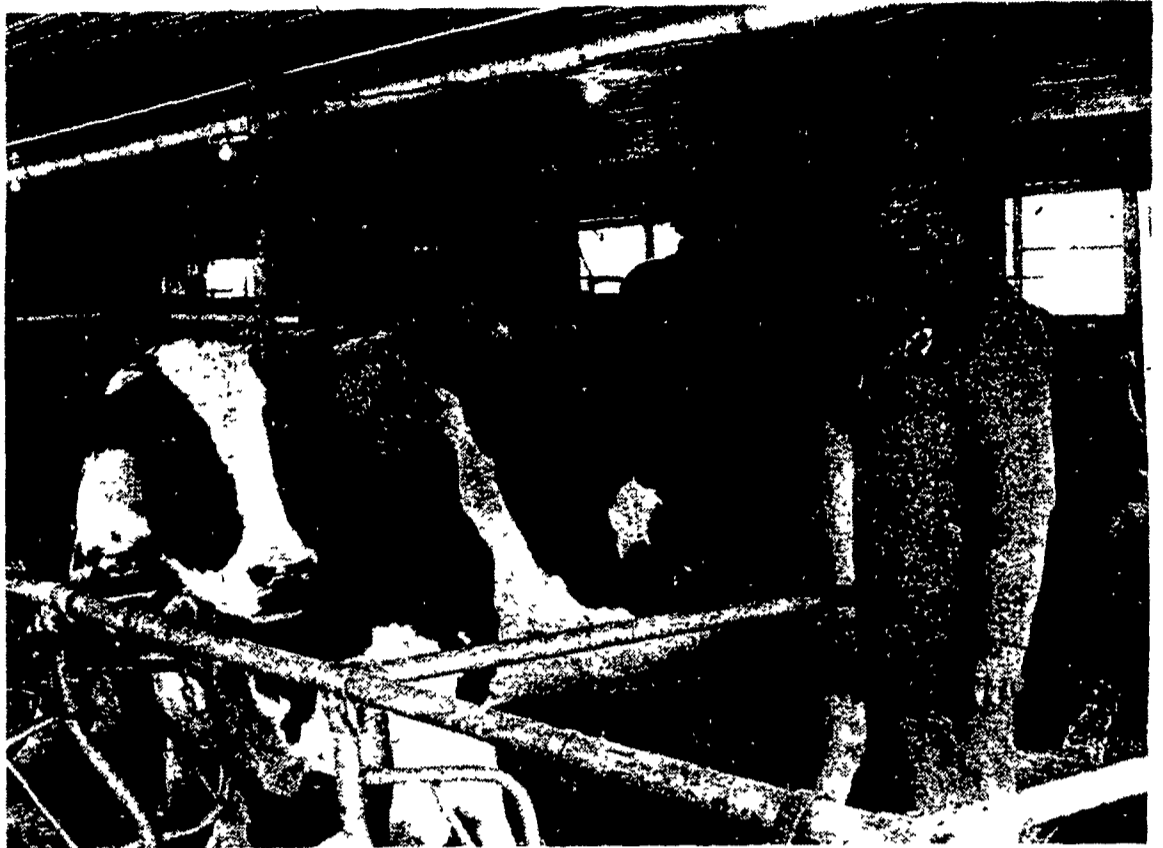
Being an AI technician means

more than just breeding cows. The technician is also a salesman, an accountant, an educator, an advisor, a sire expert and perhaps most important to the dairy producer, a trusted friend.

McDowell says, "It's all sales. What you do and what you say, even when you're not inseminating cattle, is important."

Farmers have come not only to trust his ability but also to rely on his judgement. In the eastern part of the county where McDowell's unit operates, farmers often ask his suggestions on which bull to use on their cows.

This is when McDowell the educator and advisor goes to work. He doesn't hesitate. "I ask first what the creamery test." Test is important to the dairy farmer, he explains, because they foresee protein testing in the future. "Then I ask how she stands in the herd - if she is in the high, middle or low



Atlantic Breeders' Cooperative AI technician Robert McDowell receives a congratulatory handshake from dairyman Delmar Neff, R1 Christiana. The occasion was McDowell's marking of a company record — breeding his 100,000th first-service cow. Seemingly unsure of her part in this picture-snapping session was Neff's Holstein cow, a Harrisburg Gay Ideal daughter who was bred to Kingway Elevation Very.

part of the herd." He says he then considers the cow's conformation, her dairyness and strength, and selects a sire accordingly. "You must know bulls," he states.

McDowell says price is sometimes a consideration for farmers, and they may say to him, "Don't use an expensive bull." He says he also considers if they are planning to raise the calf. He points out that the dairyman is investing in a heifer calf. "If the animal is in the top half of the herd, you can move up in price. I say, 'You want her to have the best heifer possible.'"

Working on heat detection is another part of McDowell's work. He points out that Atlantic does not give free repeat services, so it is to the dairyman's advantage to be sure the cow is in heat the first time he calls. "When a cow repeats, a farmer loses three week's worth of milk," McDowell notes.

One positive change McDowell has observed in his 33 years of breeding is that farmers today do a better job of having cows in good condition. "We have made great advances. There are better cattle now and better feed, and they are handled more kindly," he says.



Being an AI technician means more than just breeding cows. The technician is a salesman, an accountant, an educator, an advisor, a sire expert, and perhaps most importantly to the dairy producer, a trusted friend. McDowell is a firm believer in keeping written records on each cow, farm, etc.

McDowell tells dairymen the best time to observe heat is at 7:00 a.m. He also advises them to observe the cattle before that first bucket is rattled in the barn in the morning. "If one is standing and the rest are lying down, chances are she's in heat," he says. He also thinks dairymen should turn their cows out in the evening and observe them, but realizes that is not always possible. The next best thing, he says, is observation in the barn.

Another change in the AI industry over the last 33 years is the heavy competition which exists today, something unknown in the early days when the technique was first introduced. McDowell

remembers that he was the tenth employee hired by what was then Southeastern Pennsylvania Artificial Breeders Cooperative.

He recalls, "We didn't have to be concerned about the competition. We were even a little independent. They had to call in by a certain time or we didn't breed their cows that day."

"We used to run around with four thermos bottles." In those days of fresh semen, what wasn't used in a day was discarded. Today McDowell's car holds a liquid nitrogen tank which allows him to carry a two-month supply of semen.

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Thirty-three years ago when McDowell joined ABC, he recalls, "we used to run around with four thermos bottles" full of fresh semen, a one-day supply. Today his car is equipped with a nitrogen tank containing a two-month supply of frozen semen.



In talking about McDowell, dairyman Amos K. Lantz of Paradise says, "He encourages us when we are discouraged." McDowell counsels the farmers on bulls to boost production, better heat detection, feeding and handling.