

# A Crawford farm with 85,000 bosses

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SAEGERTOWN — The Crawford County Home Farm, established in 1855, is run quite differently than a family dairy farm. Although 375 acres sound average, the buildings, labor force and dairy herd are unusual.

The large brick Home houses two hundred residents that are aged and unable to care for themselves. The impressive structure faces Rt. 198 near Saegertown.

Directly behind the brick building are several barns and outbuildings. Each barn is painted white with gray trim and displays a sign over the door reading hog barn, milkhouse, etc. The interiors are every bit as impressive as the exteriors. The floors are swept clean and covered with lime and the smooth walls and ceilings are painted white with no cobwebs in sight. Two long dairy barns join a large hay barn in the rear to make a u-shaped pattern. These are institutional barns and there are very few like them.

Charles Bruckner, the Crawford County Home Farm Superintendent for the past five years said the key to his responsibility is "to keep evrything in balance." He went on to explain he works with several government programs and community projects. These supply the farm with most of its labor force.

The farm employs four Union members with the additional laborers being affiliated with the government and community programs. There is a work release community service called workfare which is for those on welfare that are now working to receive those smae benefits. The amount of welfare granted is divided by the minimum wage (3.35 per hour) to determine the number of hours the person must work. This is a new program at the County Home Farm and there are three workers

in this. All are under twenty-three years of age.

Charles Bruckner was educated in northwestern Pennsylvania and graduated from the University of Georgia in Tifton, Ga. He feels there must be a problem in educating youth since many obviously have little desire to improve themselves. He feels there is a need to train these people and since the county farm is owned by the taxpayers it is a good place to start.

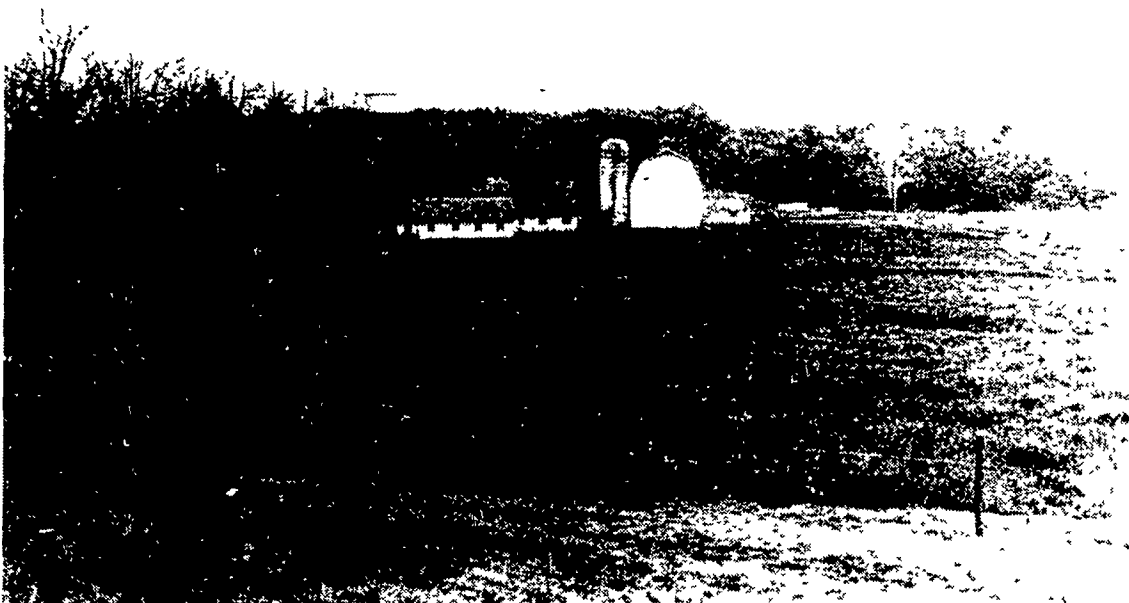
Another program that works much like Work-Fare is a jail-release project now in effect. This is for those who commit non-violent crimes but cannot pay the fines. These are worked out in the same manner as the welfare monies.

CETA (comprehensive education training activity) and SEEDY (summer employment for economically disadvantaged youth) are also part of the farms' training programs. Three of these youth will begin work June 16.

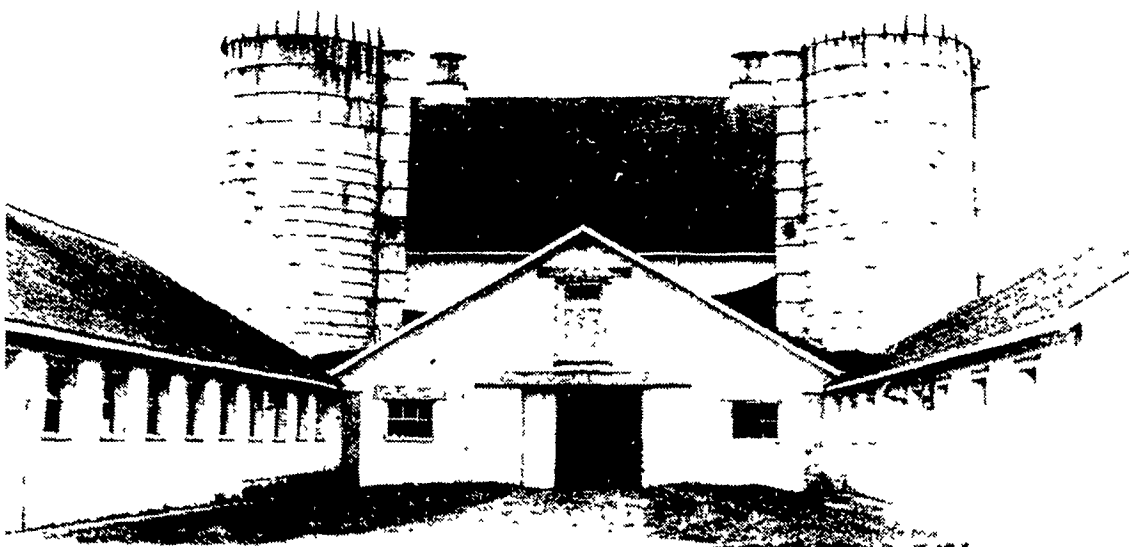
It may appear that the Crawford Co. Home Farm has more employees than needed but with 80 swine, 50 dairy beef, 105 heifers and 27 milk cows, there is plenty work to be done. Also, when taken into account there is no barn cleaner, tractor with front loader, silo unloader or pipeline and only one small hay elevator - the manpower is crucial. There is also a twenty-acre garden and the weeding and harvesting is done by individuals with hand tools.

There are a couple fo reasons for the lack in equipment. One of these is common - the large amount of money needed at one time. Most importantly though, Bruckner feels that that same money is better utilized in manpower:

"Instead of purchasing expensive equipment from a corporation, which may only be used a few weeks in the year, we use that money to pay three or four workers the whole year. That gets money



Overall view shows the institutional farm of the Crawford County Home.



This is a barn complex on Crawford County Home and Farm. Hay barn is one of the largest in the area.

into the county and into more peoples' pockets. In this way the farm is directly effecting the community," he said.

Along with the buildings and labor force the dairy herd is unique, especially their recent success and the manner in which their replacement heifers are raised.

The Holstein herd is comprised of 27 grade cattle. The County Home Farm has been on DHIA test since it was intiated in Crawford County. There have been cattle at the Home since it was established in 1855. Ken Custard, the hersman since 1979 is proud of the herds' records. Last month the herd was

second in milk in Crawford Co. with 20,670 lbs. and fourth in fat with 719 lbs. The high cow in the herd has a record of 25,184 milk, 914 fat at 3 yrs. 9 mos. Half of the herd are first time heifers at this time.

Custard is attentive to the cattle and this helps production. He was reared on a farm near Meadville and has been employed at other farms. He has been working at the County Home Farm and residing on the premises with his family.

Custard said that in 1979 the farm was 80th of 150 herds on test in the county. In 1982, they were second. That is quite a climb in three short years. The display case in the barn holds plaques depicting "most gain in milk" for 1981 and "most gain in fat" in 1980.

Custard does 90 per cent of the milking although he does have a relief milker. He milkes on a regular schedule which varies less than fifteen minutes from his 6:15 a.m. and 5 p.m. times. He has a bit of good philosophy about cattle:

"I don't hit animals. I think they should be treated as you would want to be treated."

Ken also thinks that the cows are the most important factor on a dairy farm. He feels that if the owner doesn't like to milk he should hire someone who is capable to do it for him.

Charlie Bruckner agreed and mentioned that Ken is usually kept out of the fields to have ample time with the herd. Both men think this would work better for family farms, too. If one person has a designated specialty, it is better left to that individual.

In managing the herd Ken mentioned that he culls heavily. If health problems arise the cow is

apt to be beefed. Ken may feel he can cull more easily than most farmers because meat is needed at the Home too. Also the Crawford Co. Home Farm has gotten some good deals on their herd replacements.

Bruckner and Custard have been buying the heifers as calves at the Meadville Livestock Auction. They rarely spend more than \$120. for any one Holstein heifer. The obvious disadvantage is that they don't know what they're getting. On the other hand if the heifers don't milk when they get into the herd they are used for beef. The farm provides all the beef for its residents. This way it's a no-lose proposition.

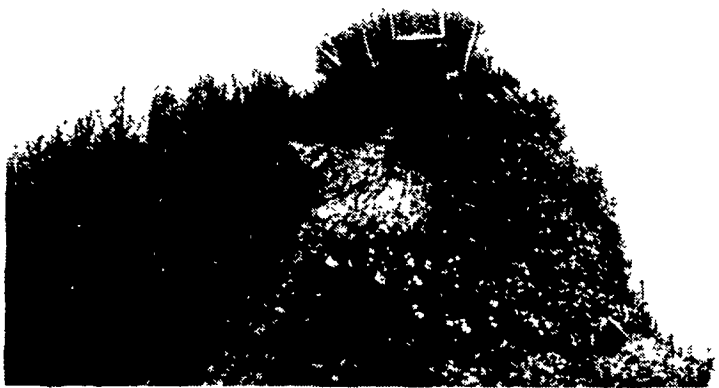
The surprising and pleasing result is the high production. Seven of these auction calves are now milking and averaging 18,500 lbs. of milk. Last year, they purchased 60 calves. As they are purchased they are isolated and watched. This way disease in the herd can be prevented.

The herd is expanding with heifers freshening and have outgrown the 30 tie stall barn. Recently one half of the second barn was converted to 16 tie stalls to meet the need. The 400-gallon bulk tank will be replaced soon with a used 800-gallon tank.

The Crawford County Home Farm plants 120 acres of corn, 50 acres of oats and the rest goes to hay and pasture. The terrain is rather steep so some land is rented. It is also interesting to note that the farm cuts the hay off the Crawford Co. fairgrounds.

It seems as though little is wasted. After the corn is picked the corn stalks are baled. This was

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A second greenhouse has been added at Crawford County Home and Farm for additional produce crops.



Crawford County Home faces Rt. 198 and presents a well-kept and trim appearance to community.