

Dairy mgt. course combines 'hands-on' with study

WILLIAMSPORT — The first class of Dairy Herd Management at The Williamsport Area Community College is now history and personnel at the college hope history will repeat itself because the program has become a success story, not only for the College but for its graduating class.

One of the exciting aspects of the Dairy Herd Management program when it began a year ago at the

Community College was that students would have the opportunity to learn hands-on at a working farm. When the College accepted the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture's offer to use the state farm facilities two years ago, several doors were opened.

Foremost, it provided the first opening the College had to give its agribusiness students an op-

portunity to combine practical application with classroom theory. The two-year, associate degree agribusiness students have participated in farm chores, learned about operating farm machinery and viewed first-hand how record-keeping relates to the world of Agribusiness.

Danville State Farm
When the College made the

decision to offer a one-year certificate program in Dairy Herd Management, the Danville farm was there for students to utilize and has proven an excellent training ground for the first class of students.

The Danville State Farm Laboratory houses 110 dairy cows and 60 head of replacement stock. The herd produces more than 18,000 pounds of milk with 700 pounds of fat.

The farm provides opportunities for experience in all phases of dairy farming as the entering class of students soon learned. The 16 students (all full-time but one) spent at least two days a week, from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., at the Farm and participated in all aspects of the day-to-day farm operation.

Besides learning proper milking techniques, the dairy students learned breeding, health care, feed rationing, and crop raising. Dairy Herd Management instructor Robert Patton (himself a farm owner) prepared the students in classes at the College's Earth Science Center near Allenwood before busing them to the Farm to apply theory of practice.

In classroom
In the classroom, Patton emphasized to students the need to develop keen decision-making skills, especially relating to financing and managing a dairy business. He accomplished this by presenting students with the many problems encountered on a daily basis on a farm. He posed such problems as: "When is it best to repair a piece of farm equipment and when is it more economical to replace it?"; "When do you call the vet, when do you doctor livestock yourself or when is it best

to sell?"; "How many crops do you need to plant?"; "What crops do you need to raise for your type of farm?"; "What's your return on investment and facilities?"; "Is your farm showing a profit and what do you do about it if it's not?" Patton then made students solve the problems and relate it to what they were learning at the farm.

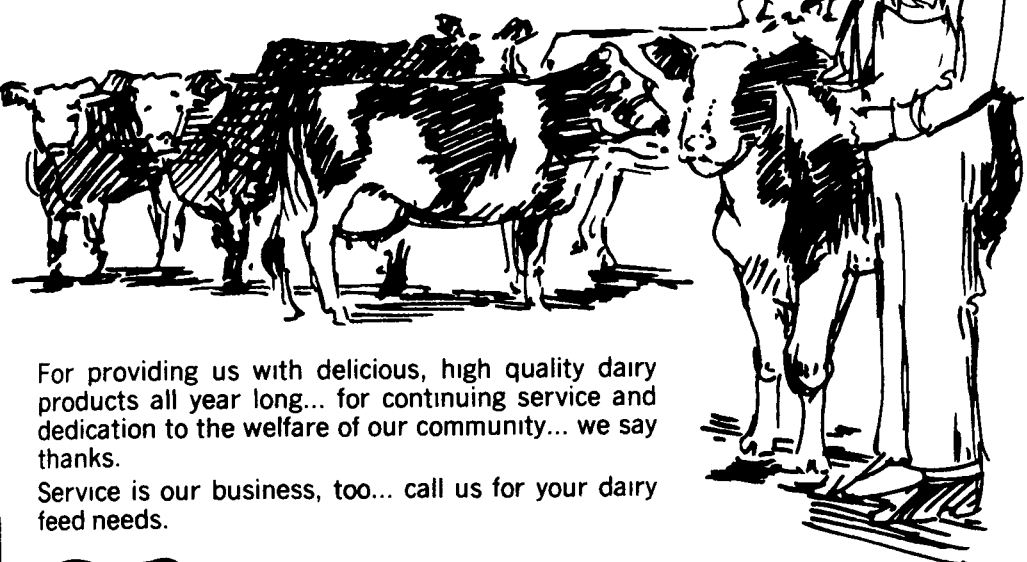
One example of the way Patton related classroom work to practical application is the artificial breeding instruction. After theory was stressed in the classroom, students cut apart reproductive tracts obtained from slaughter cows at a meat packing plant. Instructor Patton says, "When breeding a cow artificially, you can only feel your way around. Dissecting reproductive tracts showed students exactly what they were feeling." Students then practiced artificially breeding the Danville State Farm cows and eventually became certified breeders.

Graduation
Of the 15 full-time students enrolled in the program, 14 graduated on May 12. Most of the students who had come to the College from "home" farms returned to those farms. Of the others, all have jobs. A number of graduates, hired as herdsmen, are reporting starting salaries of between \$12,000 — \$15,000 a year. Of the 14 students completing the program, two were women. For a new program, these figures indicate its strength, especially since no attrition was experienced. To date, 11 students have enrolled for Fall '84.

This year, eight microcomputers have been installed at the Earth

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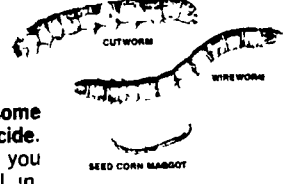
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