

Industry's 'friend in Pa.'

breakdown. Another innovation that Gruber feels certain will boost his production is snout cooling. During the hot summer months, pipes channel geothermally cooled air to the front of each of the 20 new farrowing crates. Though the temperature in the rear portion of the crate may be between 80° and 90°, air temperature at the sow's head remains at 70° or less. Since going to snout cooling, Gruber claims a 20-percent increase in feed consumption, with some sows eating as much as 18 pounds per day even in the heat of summer. He feels that his sows' hearty appetites result in more milk for the growing broods.

Future plans at the Gruber farm call for a gestation building for his 60 sows, as well as a boar test station.

"The purebred breeder of tomorrow is going to have to provide commercial producers with a lot of information in terms of health, weight gain information, and loin eye and backfat thickness," Gruber predicts, adding that we've only begun to explore "the tip of the iceberg" with regard to swine production technology.

"Within the near future we'll be

developing embryos in incubators. Genetic engineering has only begun and we're very close to being able to sex animals," Henry points out, adding that he doesn't know whether or not animal production is headed in the right direction.

"It used to be that one of the few ways for young people to get started in agriculture was through the hog business," says Gruber. But with recent developments in genetics, pharmaceuticals and building technology ushering in the age of the mega-producer, Gruber fears for the future of the small pork producer.

Though thinking big may pave the way to big profits, Gruber is confident that operations housing thousands of sows entail an equal proportion of risk with respect to disease. Such an operation would give him "too many sleepless nights" to make the business worthwhile.

Nevertheless, Gruber feels that the large "swine factory" confinement operations are here to stay, and will be one of the challenges faced by young aspiring hog producers such as his 16-year-old son Seth, a Lehigh County 4-H Swine Club member and partner in the family operation.

Off to a running start in the swine show circuit, Seth showed his first Pa. Farm Show grand champion swine in 1977 at the age of nine, and duplicated the feat the following year.

Plenty of encouragement on the home front has also assisted Seth in raising four county swine champions and exhibiting the lightweight champion steer at the 1980 Farm Show.

"One of the most pleasing experiences in our lives has been watching our son grow through the 4-H program," says his mother, Marsha, the Gruber family's chief advocate, who also handles all requisite business paperwork, as well as the pigs, themselves, on

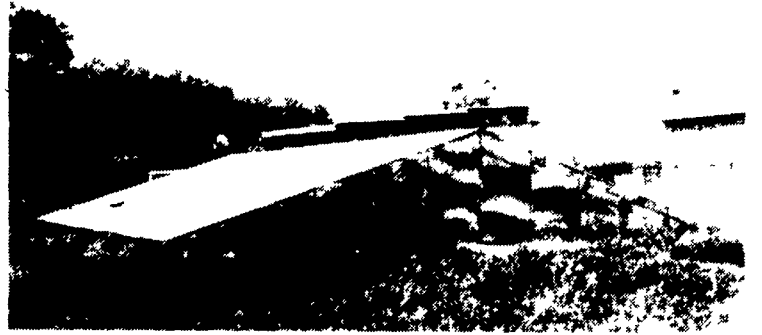
occasion.

Seth's future plans include college—hopefully in the field of animal production—and then a career in swine production at home with his partner-father.

It's a good industry," Henry

concludes, "and it's important that we keep it here in the East where it belongs: close to our markets."

And from the farrowing house to the packing plant, Henry Gruber is determined to do his part to keep it here.



This 200-day capacity manure pit is covered with transparent fiberglass. The result is less odor and increased bacterial breakdown in the top two feet of sludge.



"Keep them dry, keep them warm and keep them out of the draft," is Henry's advice for successful farrowing. Coated wire farrowing crate floors are equipped with heated mats in new facility.


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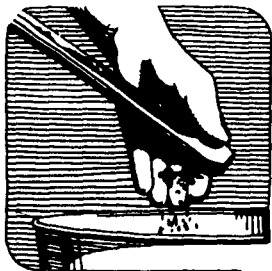
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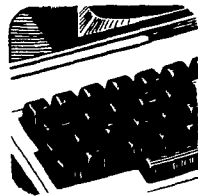

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