

# Professor and his antelope

... African antelope was the easiest part of getting them to University Park.

them in Naples, Italy, for the requisite 60 days. Since regulations stipulated that wild ruminants could only be exported to zoological parks, Philadelphia Zoo officials agreed to accept Cowan's stock. Offspring of the original animals could then be legally transferred to Penn State.

When the Naples quarantine period had passed, the antelope were shipped to Clifton, N.J., to endure an additional 30-day quarantine. At the termination of this quarantine, the 16 surviving animals finally arrived in Philadelphia, but the long awaited antelope progeny would never reach the university. After 3½ years, all but four of the original antelope had died, and no offspring had been produced. Convinced that he, himself, could successfully raise the duikers, the tireless professor planned a new attack.

"So I worked on the USDA to approve the Penn State deer pens as a zoological park, and in January of 1981, approval came through," he recounts.

Two months later, Cowan was back in Africa, and an understanding parks board granted him permission to capture 30 more antelope. Discovering that he was no longer permitted to take animals at the original capture site, Cowan worked in 15 different locations during April and May before capturing 33 animals and donating several to the East London Zoo. But once again, government regulations conspired to stand in his way.

Cowan soon found that the Italians had rewritten their quarantine regulations, making it impossible for him to use the Naples station. Appeals to other

USDA-approved quarantine stations in South Africa, Kenya and Germany produced similar results. With no way to turn, Cowan deposited all his animals in the East London Zoo, and went home to plan his strategy.

One glimmer of hope remained. Though the owner of the South African quarantine station located at Walvis Bay had refused to quarantine Cowan's animals because they were too few in number to warrant manning the station, the professor had a different proposition. Suppose he, himself, would rent the facilities and remain at the station for the 60-day period?

And so, with the support of the University's Dean of the College of Agriculture, Sam Smith, Dr. Cowan struck an agreement with the quarantine station's owner. He would quarantine his own animals for two months at a cost of \$5,000.

Upon crossing the desert to the quarantine station, Cowan found it to be in deplorable condition, with no electricity or water, and layers of old animal dung covered by drifting sand. Resolving to make the best of a bad situation, he sent the required blood samples to the National Animal Disease Laboratory in Plum Island, N.Y., and set up housekeeping in his 12-foot camping trailer for the duration of the quarantine.

But an end to the professor's ordeal was not yet in the cards. Two days before Christmas, 1981, he received word that two of his animals had tested positive for rinderpest, a disease that had supposedly been eradicated in Africa in 1904. His instructions were to remove the two suspect antelope, clean and sanitize the

facilities and remain for an additional 60-day quarantine period.

At the end of this second quarantine period, the University was required to fly a veterinarian from the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service headquarters in Hyattsville, Md., to Walvis Bay. The APHIS veterinarian then accompanied Cowan and his animals from the quarantine station, to Johannesburg, and then on to New York.

The professor's precious shipment reached U.S. soil on March 12, 1982. Finally, after an additional 30-day stateside

quarantine had ended, the antelope reached University Park in April, nearly seven years after Dr. Cowan's introduction to the species at the Pretoria Zoo. Counting births, deaths, and culls since the time that the animals began their long journey from the East London Zoo, a total of 18 antelope remained: five males and 13 females.

Today the University's herd numbers 65, and reproduction, "is going along optimally," with some females averaging one offspring every seven months, reports Dr. Cowan.

Though a small amount of forage research is currently underway, Cowan points out that the main objective is to build herd size, since Penn State's token population represents the only blue duikers existing outside of Africa.

One way to assure the future of the antelope is to establish populations at different locations. This is a phase of "project duiker" that will hopefully go smoothly since the University currently has a waiting list of animal scientists, agronomists and plant breeders who, "can't wait to get ahold of them," says Dr. Cowan. To that end, Cowan will be accompanying 12 duikers south next week to establish a second population at North Carolina State University.

With this mission accomplished, Penn State's retired professor emeritus of animal nutrition will be off to New Zealand for some long overdue rest and relaxation. Admittedly though, he'll still be sleeping with one eye open.

"I won't rest easy until we have hundreds of duikers established in several locations," Dr. Cowan asserts.

And it's not difficult to understand why.



At an adult weight of nine pounds, the blue duiker is among the world's smallest antelope. But despite their small size, efforts by Penn State's Dr. Robert Cowan to import the African antelope for forage research turned into a king-size undertaking.

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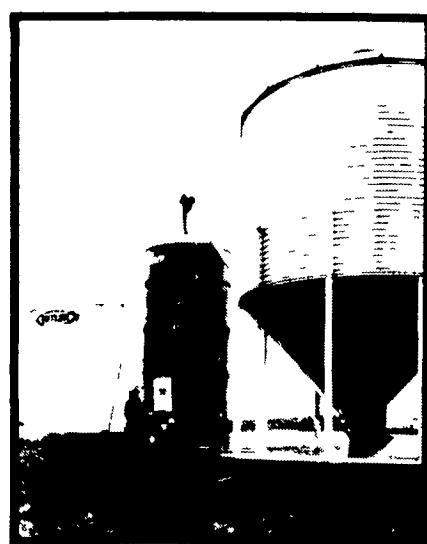
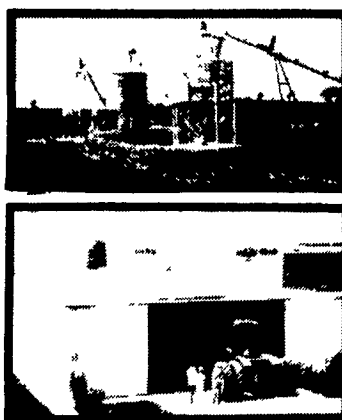
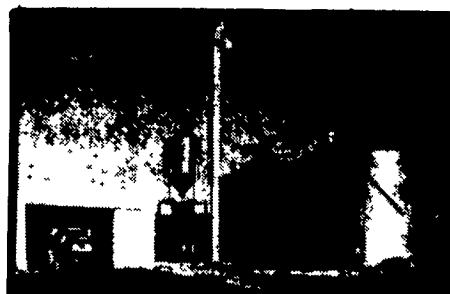
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