

Danish Ag College Students

BY MARTHA J. GEHRINGER
LANCASTER — Few graduating college students would elect to visit Lancaster for their senior trip to study agriculture. However, a group of Danish college students opted for an ag-oriented tour of the United State instead of a trip to France.

The 30 delegates from the Denmark's agricultural college, Grassten Landbrugskole, decided to combine tourism with an education on American agriculture.

Prior to arriving in Lancaster on Tuesday, the group spent two days in New York City. Following the Lancaster visit, they headed for farms in the Cambridge area in Ohio and the Shenandoah Valley in Virginia. They planned to conclude their two-week holiday in the United States by exploring Washington D.C. for two days.

"We did not want to be just tourists. We wanted to also meet with the people and we felt this was the best way to accomplish that,"

explained Hans Knudt Krag, an instructor at Grassten.

He noted the favorable exchange rate of the Danish krone to the U.S. dollar made the trip affordable for the 26 students and four teachers on the tour.

The students on the tour recently completed a three-year program at the school. The remainder of the 1,000 student graduating class selected France for their senior trip.

Torben Milthers, the Agricultural Attache of the Royal Danish Embassy in Washington D.C., compared Grassten to a junior college. Students opted to attend the school after completing nine to ten years of formal education.

Grassten, located in Jutland in the southernmost part of Denmark, offers both the ground course and the management course for agricultural students, Krag said.

Ag Education — Danish Style
 By completing both courses,



Danish students from the agricultural school of Graasten Landbrugskole, located in southern Denmark, visited the Lancaster area this week as part of their senior trip.



David Landis (left), Lancaster County Extension Agent Jay Irwin and Danish Agricultural Attache Torben Milthers respond to questions from the Danish students at Landis' farm in Lancaster.

students qualify for a green card — a form necessary to buy a farm in Denmark. Without the form, Krag explained, a person needs special permission to purchase a farm and does not qualify for government benefits. These benefits include no interest rates on the first \$30,000 loaned for the first five years. A second benefit is a \$5,000 subsidy to pay for lawyers. Krag noted the government extends these benefits to help young farmers get started in production agriculture.

Prior to entering the ground course, students must complete a six-month practical course of work on farms. The ground course lasts five months.

Students electing to continue at the college enter the management phase. During this time they must complete an additional year of practice at two different farms — one dairy farm and one swine operation. During the practice portion, the students must follow a parallel course of study arranged by the Young Farmer organization. Krag said that the Young Farmer organization in Denmark is similar to the American organization. Throughout their practical study the students learn about raising crops to feed that species of animal.

"When they enter school, they

know a lot about practical items. Their weak side is the economics. When they buy a farm they will need to know how to handle \$300,000 to \$1 million," Krag said. Students returning to college specialize in either pigs or cows. They gain an education in managing the land to produce crops for this species as well as the economic education.

Krag stated that approximately 2,000 students begin the ground course and 1,000 students continue into the farm management course. Of those who enter the management course, 80 percent will farm with 25 percent of those students entering the business full

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