

Boars To Be Auctioned Off At Cornell

ITHACA, N.Y. — Members of a group that will "graduate" from Cornell University next month have no job worries: They'll definitely be bringing home the bacon.

The graduation actually will be an auction of up to 23 young boars that are undergoing a four-month test for qualities that would make them top breeding stock for pork producers in New York and neighboring states.

The auction will be held at 2 p.m. on Sept. 19 at Cornell's Livestock Judging Pavilion.

Auction participants will be selected from 36 boars from New York, Pennsylvania and Maine being evaluated, according to Tro V. Bui, the manager of the boar test program and a swine specialist in the New York State College of Agriculture and Life Sciences at Cornell.

Cornell serves as the official Boar Test Station for New York State, where the pork industry is expanding rapidly: Its annual farm income is now estimated at \$35 million, up \$10 million since a decade ago.

The boars to be auctioned represent major breeds -- Yorkshire, Hampshire, Duroc, Landrace and Spots. The Cornell test focuses on daily weight gain, feed efficiency, carcass quality and structural soundness, among other criteria.

"These factors are evaluated under unbiased, uniform conditions," Bui said. "The objective is to make superior boars available to swine breeders."

The boars under evaluation are gaining in weight daily by an average of more than two pounds since the test started in mid-May. When the test began, the boars were eight to 10 weeks old and weighed only about 50 to 60 pounds each. They are expected to weigh in at about 240 to 250 pounds each at the upcoming auction, Bui said.

"When these boars become fully mature at the age of two years, they would become 700-pounders," he said. "The useful life of boars as breeding animals on the farm is about three years, and hence they must be replaced with new ones every three years or so."

Unlike many dairy animals, more than 95 percent of sows are bred naturally rather than by artificial insemination, he explained.

Farmers usually keep one boar for every 15 sows, and "that's why it's extremely important for the farmer to have boars with superior traits to improve the swine herd," Bui pointed out.

"Because of the proximity to major markets such as the metropolitan area of New York, coupled with increases in demand for pork, the potential for pork production in the state is great," he said.

Another reason for the growth of the state's pork industry is that some farmers who quit dairying under the federal buy-out program are getting into pork production as an alternative, he noted.

Cornell is conducting the test at a newly constructed test facility at the university's Animal Science Teaching and Research Center at Harford, some 15 miles from campus. A fire destroyed the previous facility in 1984 at Cornell's agronomy research farm on Mt. Pleasant.

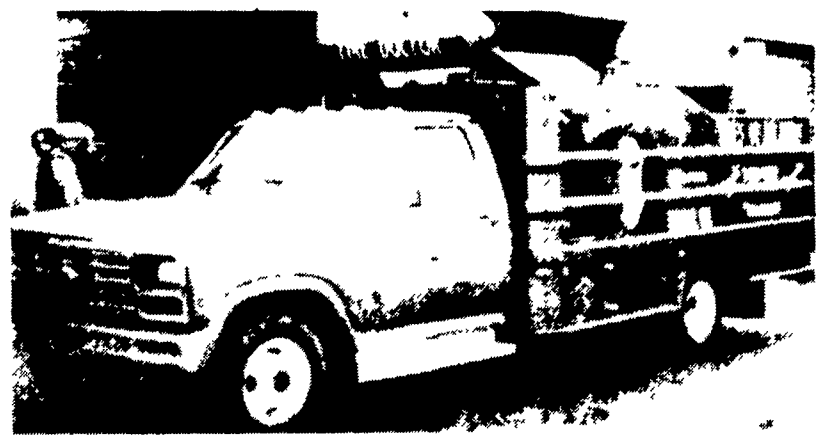
"The new facility, which is capable of housing as many as 56 boars for performance tests, is outfitted with new equipment, such as

pen partitions, gas heaters and adjustable feeders, that were donated by members of the pork industry and several agribusiness firms," Bui said.

Cornell's swine testing program is a joint effort of the New York Pork Producers Cooperative, the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets, Cornell

Cooperative Extension, Cornell's Department of Animal Science and the New York State College of Veterinary Medicine at Cornell. The program was initiated in 1984.

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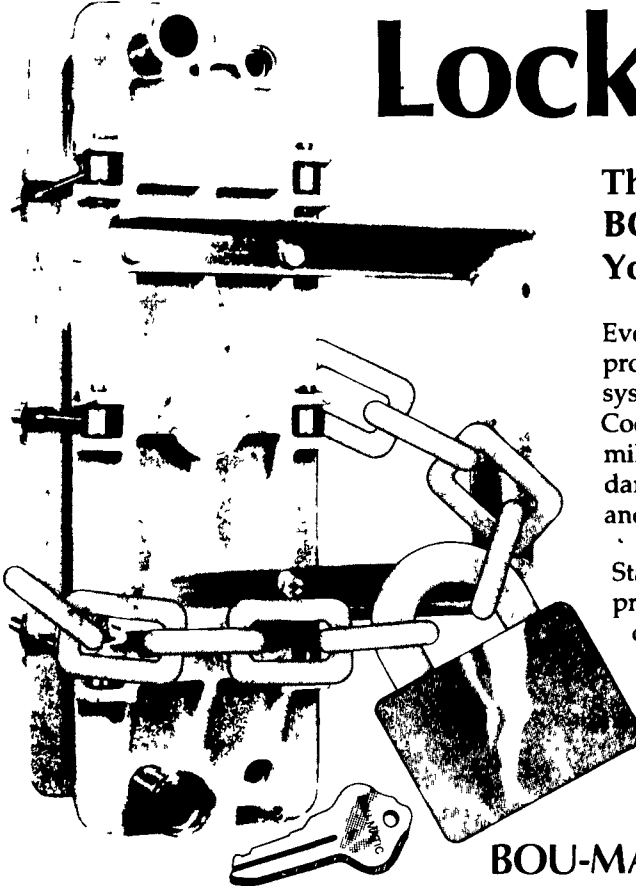
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