

Every time I talk to hog producers about their operations, it becomes apparent that everyone in the hog industry does things differently. I've visited many hog operations and none of them are alike. What is the best way to raise hogs?

Just like people, hogs can adapt to a wide variety of facilities, or even a lack of facilities, and do well. Even though this is true, there are distinct advantages and disadvantages to various rearing systems and no one system is best in all situations.

Take intensive hog production for instance. A total confinement operation has the advantage of housing the animals in close proximity. This allows for ease in handling the animals and makes it easier to observe the herd regularly. Hogs in total confinement operations are housed in environmentally controlled units where temperature and ventilation are regulated. Manure is generally stored for field fertilization later and can be applied at proper rates, provided enough land is available to use it all.

Disadvantages of intensive, total confinement operations are the cost of building the facility and the problems associated with disease spread if a contagious agent gets established in the facility. Also, this type of unit has been the most criticized by the animal rightists.

Another kind of hog operation commonly used in this area is a less intensive one, with some outside hog rearing and a farrowing house and nursery confinement buildings. This type of operation has the advantage of lower costs compared to more intensive units,

since fewer facilities are needed. Unlike the more intensive-type of operation, it comes under less scrutiny from the animal rights activists. Since sows are farrowed within a farrowing crate and piglets are housed in a nursery, management of the sow and pigs is easier for the producer. Manure in this type of operation is usually collected from the farrowing house and nursery for later cropland application, while stocking rates with pasture-kept sows will determine the nutrient deposition on the sow lots.

Disadvantages include more outside labor in handling animals that are outside. It takes longer to feed and manage an animal housed in larger areas out-of-doors than those kept in confinement. Finally, animals housed out-of-doors are exposed to the elements and need additional protection during periods of extreme temperatures.

The last type of hog operation I will discuss is low-intensity, minimal-confinement operations, where animals are kept entirely out-of-doors and are allowed to farrow in the elements. Only occasionally are they offered some protection through the use of simple housing such as plywood A-frame houses.

Advantages of this type of production system are minimal costs in electric fencing and simple housing. This is the cheapest and least intensive type of hog production, and is rarely singled out by animal rightists.

A disadvantage is exposure of the hog to the elements. Since animals are essentially out in the open, large piglet losses can occur

during extreme weather fluctuations, heavy rainfall, or unseasonal snowfall. Farrowing is limited to specific seasons of the year to avoid extremely cold temperatures.

Generally, this type of operation results in the fewest number of marketed pigs per sow per year. Numbers may vary depending on weather patterns. Manure can be a problem with this type of operation if stocking rates are allowed to remain high for extended periods.

Which system is the best? There is no best system. That's the reason there are so many different hog operations. The true appraisal of any system can only be made by individual managers and what operation works for them.

Beekeepers Cautioned

WARREN (Warren Co.) — Two new mites which attack honey bees have recently been introduced into the United States, according to Sanford Smith, Warren County extension agent.

One of these, the Varroa mite, is a devastating parasite that is killing colonies and drastically reducing honey yields.

Varroa is considered by many to be the most devastating pest of honey bees in the world. This mite is present throughout much of the southern United States where queen bees and packages are produced for sale. Many Pennsylvania beekeepers purchase queens and packages from the south each year.

Queens and packages can be treated effectively for Varroa mite

Livestock Judging Team Takes Awards

ALFRED, N.Y. — The Livestock Judging Team from Alfred State College (ASC) has again taken several top awards at the annual Canadian Intercollegiate Judging Competition in Guelph, Ontario.

Alfred State was the sole U.S. entry, competing against 15 two- and four-year college teams from throughout Canada. The event was staged as a stockman's contest, with entrants judging crop as well as livestock classes.

Coached by Lee LaRoche, assistant professor in the college's plant and animal science depart-

ment, the Alfred team included Thomas D. Smallback of Cherry Creek RD1, Albert A. Haier of Eden, Matthew D. Harper of Mayville RD2, and Michael L. Riley of Gettysburg. James A. Robinson of Portville was team alternate.

Smallback carried home several top individual awards for Alfred, placing first in forages, first in all crops, second in Jersey cows, and third in market lambs.

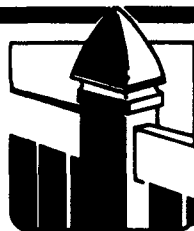
Haier took first place in sheep judging. Harper was fourth in market lambs.

As a team, Alfred was first in market lamb judging, also taking three firsts in crop judging; second cut alfalfa, carrots, and haylage. Overall, the college ranked fifth in crops, all classes, and six in livestock, all classes, taking fourth place in the event's quiz.

In addition, ASC placed third in judging tomatoes and fourth in white beans, fourth in judging both Ayrshire cows and Hereford heifers, and fifth in Jersey cows, professor LaRoche reported.

The event was staged at the University of Guelph.

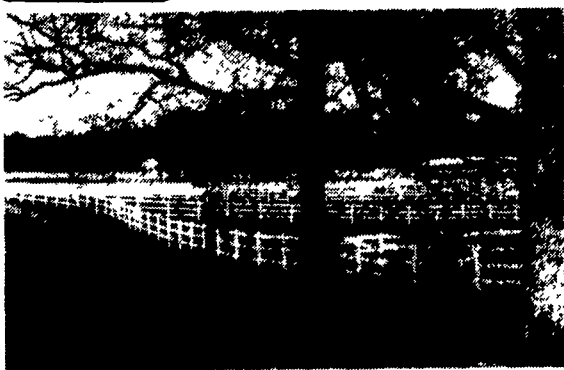
Funding for the ASC Livestock Judging Team is provided by the college's student senate.



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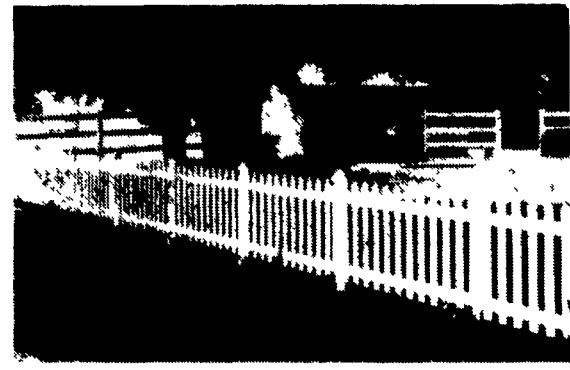
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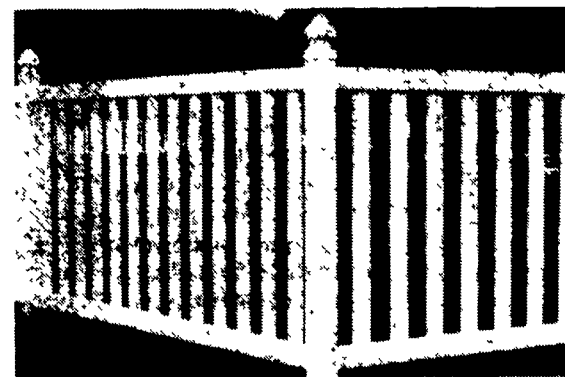
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