

# ProGenetics Opens Artificial Insemination Center

ELIZABETHTOWN (Lancaster Co.) — Keeping pace with today's rapid increase in technology, the ProGenetics branch of White Oak Mills has opened an artificial insemination (AI) center in northern Franklin County. This 22-head boar center will play a significant role in the development and performance of their top quality breeding stock.

Artificial insemination serves as a notable tool for introducing superior genetics into an existing

herd with minimal disease risk. "By utilizing just the semen, we won't risk bringing a diseased boar into the herd," said veterinarian Peggy Hawkins. The boar center will provide ProGenetics with a better avenue for introducing European and Canadian genetics without jeopardizing the health of the nucleus herd.

According to Dr. Mike Miller, geneticist and vice president of White Oak Mills, AI will allow valuable proven sires to have a



Cindy Frey adds Modena Extender (nutrients) to the semen.



Veterinarian Peggy Hawkins prepares a semen sample to determine sperm concentration.

greater impact. "We can collect semen from a boar in one central location and spread his superior genetics to numerous farm locations so more sows per board can be bred," he said. With AI, a board can sire 1,600 to 2,000 litters annually, rather than the 60 to 100 litters obtained by natural service.

"On the average, for every one natural boar service, AI can achieve 16 services," said Hawkins.

ProGenetics breeding scheme maintains 200 boars representing four primary lines. "If we maximize AI use at each crossing farm and multiplier farm, we will be capable of handling the job utilizing only ten boars," said Miller. Consequently, genetic progress

can occur more rapidly, and ProGenetics' gilts and boars will have better uniformity and quality than ever before.

Although Western European swine producers are choosing AI in favor of natural mating, the United States has been slow to adopt the process as a standard management practice.

"There is a lot of myth surrounding artificial insemination," said Hawkins. "Some people believe it's difficult to get sows pregnant and that smaller litters are produced." However, success rates achieve 90 percent where AI is standard practice. In particular, the reliability of the technique and the advantage of using "elite sires" has led to improved produc-

tion figures in the Netherlands, Germany, France, and Denmark.

With packers willing to pay more for lean hogs, U.S. swine producers are becoming more genetics conscious.

"With the use of AI, we are able to send a more uniform and leaner hog to market," said Miller. Because of the increase in competition among producers, AI is also beginning to occur at the commercial level.

White Oak Mills is incorporating a complete AI program in their new 1,200-sow commercial farm in Doylesburg. Fresh semen will be collected and delivered every Monday and Thursday afternoon for the weekly matings.

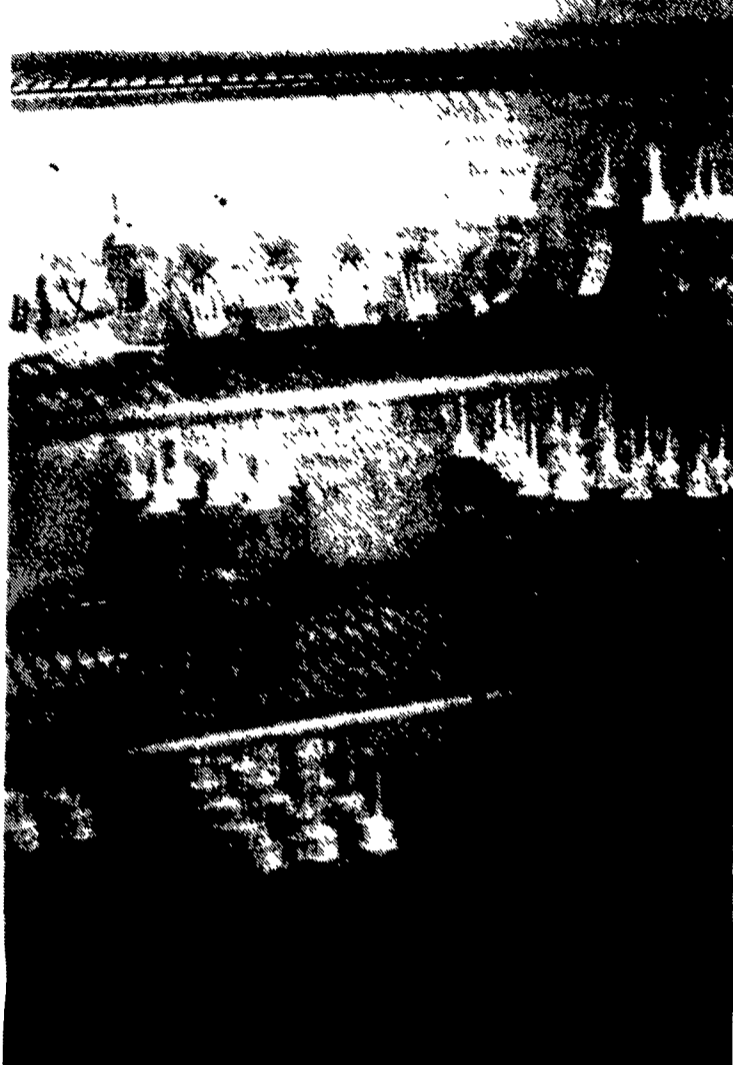
Rather than the usual 60 boars, this unit will be serviced with only three AI terminal sires.

"Even though there are misconceptions about the AI process, it is very easy to collect semen and extend it into a viable dose," said Hawkins. "The most difficult part of the process is determining when the sow/gilt is in heat, but the producer with a keen eye and a good hog sense can make AI a prominent part of his/her breeding program."

According to Miller, there are tremendous benefits available to commercial producers who incorporate AI into their units. In most cases, management practice becomes much easier.

For example, when sows are batch weaned on Thursday, breeding goes much quicker with AI than with the actual boars on

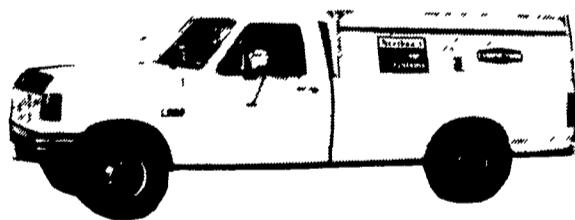
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