

# Cows, Dairy Farmers, University Interdependent

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NEWARK, Del. — I get a lot of mail from around the country. Traditional and new-style farmers alike write for information on how to succeed in the dairy business.

It used to be that inquiries came only from counties in Delaware.

But today my home county, New Castle — which not too many years ago was the dairy county in the state — now grows houses, not cows.

Only three dairy herds remain and one of those belongs to the University of Delaware.

Some years ago, I initiated a research project called "Dairy Farming in Urban Proximity."

Back then it was the growing

city of Newark and the attendant suburban sprawl that concerned us on the farm. We questioned if we would have enough land to grow crops to feed our dairy cows in the most inexpensive way, a message we continually preached to farmers throughout the state.

With time, we were forced to give up more and more acreage.

We were faced with another dilemma: how to spread the manure from our cows and heifers without disturbing our encroaching suburban neighbors.

Although they were the new kids on the block, they suddenly had more rights about clean air than the long-established farmers. Never mind that we farmers produced the cheap food they enjoyed in greater abundance than any

other nation on Earth, they wanted clean air, and the courts backed them up.

The once nationally known dairy state of New Jersey and its state university no longer enjoy this kind of prominence.

Other universities are headed in the same direction, and once-famous dairy herds are disappearing.

What about the ag students? They go to the library to look at videotapes about how it was. During semester breaks are they making up for the lack of hands-on practice? Very few do. More often students go where they can make money instead of gaining farming and dairy experience.

When I came to this country in 1951, dairy farmers in New Castle County were a strong, supportive force for the university. They came often to see the dean of the college to express their concerns. He visited their farms and he listened. The university cared about these farmers, providing them with much-needed service and advice.

New crop varieties were developed at the college farm and new farm practices tried. The first artificial insemination station in this region (now known as the Atlantic Breeders Cooperative in Lancaster, Pa.) was started at our univer-

sity dairy farm in 1942 by extension specialist Delmar Young and Dr. Symington, a veterinarian.

The university farm, together with neighboring dairy farms, was a frequently used, vital teaching place and laboratory for agriculture students.

Recognizing the importance of this work, Delaware dairy farmers in 1952 donated a new dairy barn and a dozen cows to establish the Guernsey herd for teaching purposes. This was in addition to the existing Holstein herd that was used for research.

At that time, the college had already enjoyed a close working relationship for more than 60 years with the famous Winterthur Holstein herd of Col Henry DuPont in Wilmington.

Where I grew up in Germany, prospective agriculture students had to pass a two-year practical experience on certified farms before they could enroll in college.

For years Cornell University had a similar requirement.

Even today, prospective veterinary students applying to Cornell come back to us for hands-on milking training before Cornell accepts them. Yet in our own Delaware curriculum we have never required that level of practical experience.

Some of our students come to the university farm to practice at the dairy during and between semesters. But where does this leave our students if urban expan-

sion succeeds in pushing the dairy herd off their few remaining pastures.

Suburban sprawl is no longer the encroacher. Today, university building programs and sports complexes eat up more of the university farm than housing developments.

The dairy cows that graze the pastures around the college symbolize the very meaning of an agricultural institution. They serve as a reassuring reminder to the suburban population of their rural roots.

Our dairy cows, visible from the main highway, represent a pastoral past, a way of life that many of us cherish in memory and even long to return to. They also remind us of where our most precious food comes from, real food, natural food, our most safe, sanitary and wholesome dairy food, and the best source of critical calcium.

If these cows are pushed onto a small concrete slab, removed from their natural pastures, or if they are moved out of sight, 70 miles down the road, away from the highly prized land, then this agricultural college will cease to be.

Our students will become biologists and our faculty will have lost the connection to and support of dairy farmers in the region and the state.

It will mean the end of what once was a close and supportive relationship.

Because in recent years budg-

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## Farmers' Association

(Continued from Page E3)

• **Highest Increase in Milk and Protein - Marvin R. Sauder.** The Sauder herd of cows increased 1,936 pounds of milk and 42 pounds of protein. This herd also had the three-year highest increase with 3,736 milk, 113 butterfat, and 103 protein. The herd's 1992 average was 21,672 milk, 660 protein, and 800 butterfat. The herd consists of 42 cows and 32 replace-

ment heifers. The feeding program last year included complete feed and corn silage, haylage, and alfalfa hay. Marvin and his wife, Betty, are the parents of two sons and two daughters.

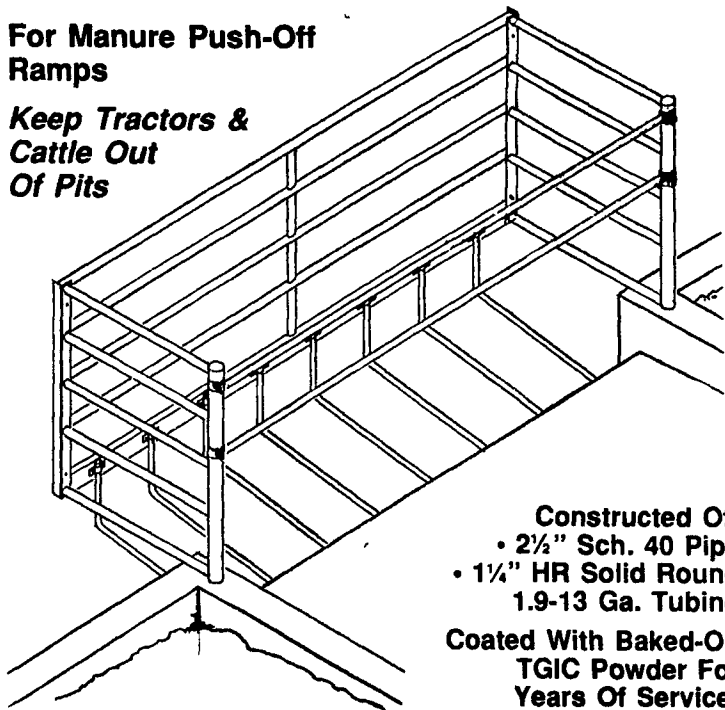
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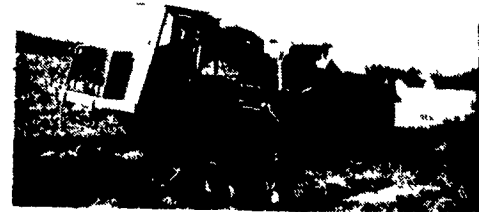
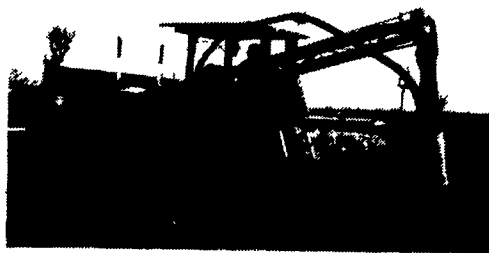
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