

'Hands-On' Approach Brings Employment For Graduates Of Delaware Valley College's Dairy Science Program

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science/dairy science students is rethinking some of the things they learned since they began work on the farm.

For the small percentage who haven't grown up on a farm, "they don't come in with any perceived notions of what should be," said George Gross, dairy superintendent of the college. "And they're very open to learning everything about animals."

That includes type and production — and examining how to reconcile the two.

For the majority of the students, according to Gross, they believe that "Mom and Dad's done it like this and you have to diplomatically explain to them that maybe that's not the best way, or here's another alternative," said Gross.

"But sometimes our ways don't work, and Mom and Dad's way, the way their farm is set up, works best."

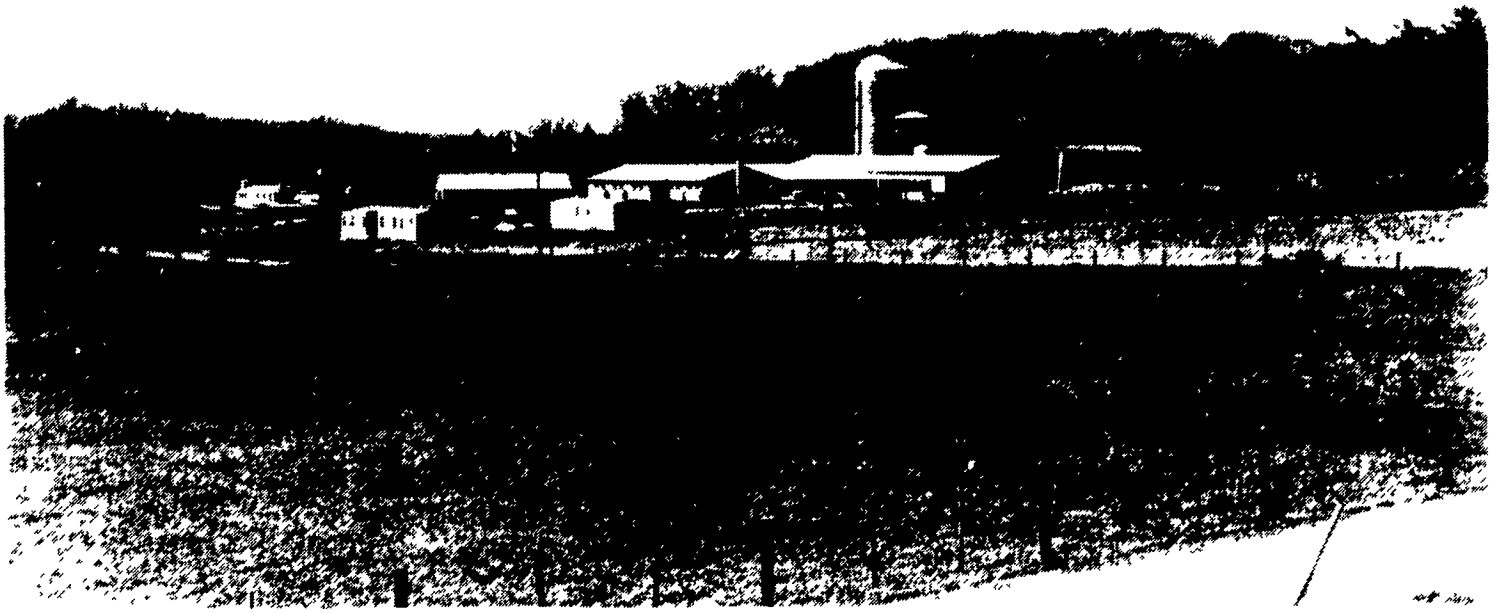
Gross, in his dual role as superintendent and dairy science instructor, manages a herd of 71 cows on test, including 46 Holsteins, 10 Jerseys, 13 Ayrshires, and two Brown Swiss. There are a total of 36 replacement stock from calves to 2 year-olds.

Altogether the Delaware Valley College farm encompasses 625 acres, of which 450 are tillable. (The 625 acres includes the equine center, orchards, all livestock facilities, and the athletic fields). Of the 450 tillable acres, 190 acres are in corn, 150 in alfalfa, 80 in timothy, and 30 are in soybeans.

On Pa.DHIA, milking herd averages are 22,895 pounds for the Holsteins, including 876f, 763p, and 2058 on milk solids nonfat (MSNF). For the Jerseys, milk totals are 14,539 pounds, 718f, 553p, and 1366 MSNF. For the Ayrshires, milk totals are 16,785 pounds, 652f, 550p, and 1477 MSNF. The Brown Swiss averages are 15,529 pounds, 640f, 563p, and 1413 MSNF.

Gross works to ensure that students enrolled in the program learn all the basics of running a farm, including milking, feeding, instruction in breeding management, heat checks, spotting cows and getting them ready, cleaning, health care, and selection of replacement animals.

Each week Gross keeps track of the nearly 200 student-hours of work study and class participation. Students become involved early on in the college's mission to provide



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hands-on learning and the "action advantage" 24-week employment program to enhance the skills learned on campus.

In its centennial year, the college hopes to continue a tradition of learning by doing, begun in 1896.

More than 90 percent of DVC graduates find work or continue to further their education, according to 1994 placement figures presented by Chris Beadling, director of public relations for the college. Those employed account for 77 percent of the respondents while 15 percent were continuing their studies. Of the respondents employed, 82 percent were employed in their major.

Graduates work for a variety of employers in the tri-state area.

For dairy science majors, it's not just learning about type and selection of proper genetics. It's also learning how to run the dairy as a business. It's an emphasis on how to increase production. Instruction combines all the elements used by successful dairy operations while putting the talents of the students to the test.

This also includes teaching how to clean and prepare an animal for showing, especially at the big events such as the state Farm Show and even some of the county fairs.

At the 1995 Allentown Fair, a Delaware Valley College 3-year-old Holstein, Doll, won grand champion female. She also was grand champion at several other shows, including the Kimberlon,



The best animals in the DVC herd in terms of production. From left, George Gross at the halter of NGS Gracious, a 3-year-old Holstein. Shane Betz is at the halter of Stoney Knob Carmel Brandy, a 2-year-old Jersey. At right is Rosebud, a 3-year-old Brown Swiss out of Trident. Photo by Andy Andrews

Goshen, and Bucks County fairs.

The champion cow's breedbook name is Peticote Leadman Doll-ET, bred by William Pettit, Vincentown, N.J. The Excellent cow's sire is Rothrock Tradition Leadman and dam is Peticote Black Donut. The 3 year-old was projected at 22,000+ pounds.

Students not only are in charge of showing and fitting the animals, but they also maintain the display at the state Farm Show. The exhibit, featuring the pedigree boards and facts about the college's dairy

program, attracts hundreds of visitors at Farm Show. For setting up the display and keeping the area clean and open, the college was honored with the overall House-keeping Award the past few years.

Gross said, "We're very proud of our students because in the last three years they have won the overall award. They're involved in a course in which they actually do

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Improvement of the herd is key to rounding out the education of the dairy science majors. "We're constantly trying to breed to the better bulls, use TMR, and made a couple more improvements," said Gross, at right. At left is Shane Betz, herdsman.



This 3-year-old Holstein, Peticote Leadman Doll-ET, won champion of several fairs, including Allentown. Shane Betz is at the halter.