

Amidst Challenge Of Urban Pressure, York Farm Family Continues To Raise Beef

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King for full-time help.

Steven's father, Harold, also comes by to check out the farm's operation. The women hold off-

farm jobs, not only for extra income but also to get health insurance for their families.

A total of 500 owned acres and 1,300 rented acres makes up the farm, which lies in the Manches-

ter and Mount Wolf areas.

The home farm area has been in the family for eight generations. Corn, soybeans, wheat, hay, barley, and oats are the main crops that the family raises. In addition, they have approximately 700 head of steers on feed and 100 beef commercial crossbred brood cows, besides a few head of hogs.

Close Neighbors

The 2002 winners of the Pennsylvania Cattlemen's Association Cattle Feeder of the Year award, the family has learned how deal with residential and industrial neighbors.

"The pasture backs right into the town," said Gross. Cows step over the township into the borough with regularity, as 40 acres of pasture are located in the borough boundaries.

Additionally, in 1992 the family became neighbors to the large Starbucks facility. The center — once an area farmed by the Grosses — borders their field, since the industrial park that

houses the Starbucks Coffee center joins the farm's boundary.

In addition, developers next to other farms are building more apartments.

"The value of the land around here is high because of industry and development," said Gross. Close proximity to a major interstate also drives up land prices, he said.

Even rented ground has become precious. A developing golf course now stands on fields the Grosses have farmed since 1967. Although they are holding steady with finding other of ground to farm, "now we have to travel, too," he said.

Rather than rail against the growth surrounding their land, however, the Gross family has chosen to turn pressure into profit.

A wood products manufacturing facility housed at the industrial park has yielded sawdust that they have used for bedding for several years now.

Although results were not good enough to continue the experiment, the Gross family also

tried to use the coffee bean shells from the nearby facility. The shells were tested and came back as 16 percent protein, so they mixed them with the feed. However it was difficult to balance the ration effectively.

Also, the Grosses have farmed and are farming, areas slotted for development. One day they came upon one of their rented cornfields, earmarked for development, to find that building had started and corn was in the process of being mowed down.

"We hurried and got the equipment and chopped it," said Daniel. "Sometimes you just have to work around them."

On other fields, "we gambled and put barley in," although houses could be standing on the field by May. The Grosses pay rent only on the ground where they harvest a crop.

Although they have been willing to adjust, they are realistic about the future of farming in their area. "Someday it might not be economical to (farm)," said Daniel. However he believes that they are moving in the right direction as they attempt to expand territory to farm.

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The Gross family sends out about three loads of cattle a month.

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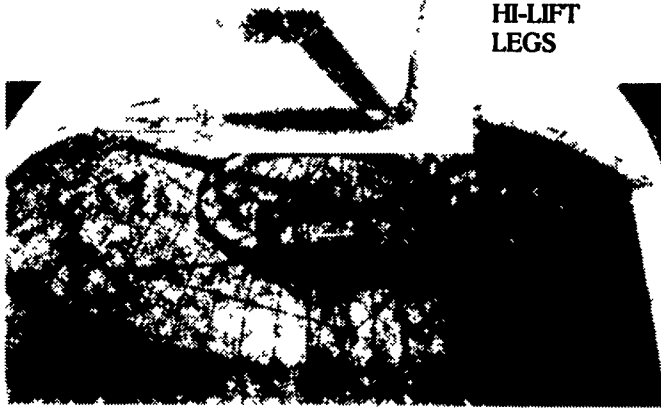
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