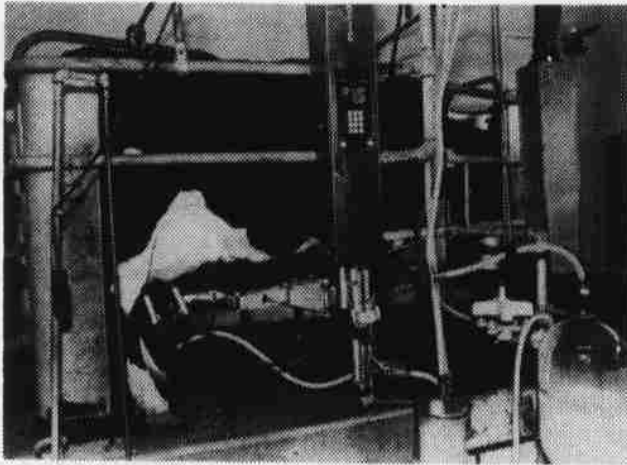


Dairy Farmers Experience Electronic Revolution



Dairy farmers of the future will benefit from sophisticated electronic equipment currently being developed by the Technion-Israel Institute of Technology and the University of Illinois.

HAIFA — Few sectors of modern society have been untouched by the electronic revolution — and the dairy farm is no exception. While computers and electronic monitoring devices have been in limited use on dairy farms in the U.S. and other countries, a joint research project conducted by the Technion-Israel Institute of Technology and the University of Illinois, Champaign-Urbana will bring these handmaidens of modern technology into the milking parlor in an unprecedented way, giving the dairyman a powerful tool to improve the management of his herds.

The \$250,000 three-year project (funded in part by the USDA) will develop sophisticated monitoring devices which automatically collect data on a cow's health and milk yield assisting dairy farmers in inventory and breeding control, feed management and health maintenance. Triggered by transistorized identification devices worn around the cow's neck, sensors at feeding bunks and milking stations will measure the temperature of the milk, the cow's food consumption and body weight, and the electrical conductivity of the milk — a measurement of the

health of the udder. Farmers will also receive data for improved breeding from an electronic pedometer which will register the cow's activity — an indication of a cow's estrous cycle.

Once the data has been collected, scientists will then determine the biological norms and variations a farmer can expect from a healthy cow for maximum milk production. The data will then be implemented to develop computer programs that will assist the dairy farmer identify those cows performing under pre-determined expectations as well as operate his farm more efficiently.

"The ultimate objective of this project is two-fold," explains Dr. Sidney Spahr, Professor of Dairy Science and head of the collaborative project at the University of Illinois. "We expect to improve the management level and decision-making capabilities of the dairy farmer which will in turn boost milk productivity. And the second objective is to accomplish this with less labor and drudge work associated with dairy farming. The Technion possesses the technical know-how necessary to implement the electronic equipment and interface the data into meaningful computer programs."

Before the advent of modern technology, farmers kept track of their cows with paper and pencil. But with today's herds as large as 400 cows, the labor involved in keeping records for efficient management is complicated and time consuming. Currently, some dairy farmers use "stand alone" electronic devices to assist in farm chores, such as automatic feed dispensers. But this project will make available an information system that will integrate an array of critical data by which dairymen can make decisions regarding the operation of their farms. At a push of a button, farmers will not only be able to "flag" those cows producing milk below standards but will also be able to consult computer programs which take into account inflation rates and other economic variables of the marketplace to optimize profit.

As the world's leader in milk production, Israel is the ideal partner for this project. Cows in Israel yield an average of 20 percent more milk than cows in the United States. Professor Ram Sagi, Professor of Livestock Engineering at the Technion's Agricultural Engineering Department and head of the Israeli team participating in the project, attributes Israel's worldwide leadership in milk production to the sophisticated management techniques currently utilized by Israeli dairy farmers, as well as extensive support systems for the farmer including artificial insemination services and central feed mills.

Dr. Spahr agrees that Israeli farmers are more "progressive" in their approach to dairy farming. Israel's large herds have made the Israeli farmer more receptive to the benefits afforded by high technology, says Dr. Spahr. "Furthermore, as a small nation, news of successful techniques travels quickly and farmers are eager to pick up new developments and try them out."

GENEVA (WNS) — Some 30,000 Swiss visited Israel during 1982, according to the Israel tourist office in Zurich. This number represents a six percent decline in the number of tourists compared to 1981. To induce more tourism, Israel will soon start a weekly charter flight from Zurich to Eilat, the Israel tourist office announced.

JERUSALEM (WNS) — The Jewish Agency is expecting some 18,000 new olim during 1983, a significant increase on last year's figure of 13,259. The Agency aliya department chairman, Rafael Kotlowitz, gave this prognosis in Jerusalem. He said 13,000 of this year's total would come from the West, compared to 8,800 of last year's figure.


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