

'Fantastic circumstances' behind beef breed avalanche

The current avalanche of new beef breeds coming into the United States is the result of the "most fantastic combination of circumstances ever to occur in the livestock industry," members of the 21st annual Beef Cattle Short Course learned here Monday.

Some of these circumstances, listed by Professor J. K. Riggs of the Animal Science Department, were high demand for beef brought on by high consumer preference and purchasing power, and a zooming population.

Another factor, he said, is the basically unprofitable commercial cow-calf phase of the beef business. Many commercial cattle producers are also dissatisfied with production levels of a large segment of the existing cattle population.

"Entrepreneurs are trying the new breeds in an attempt to make some money through 'first' sales before competition catches up," the speaker said.

Riggs said acceptance of crossbreeding has had much influence

on the new beef breed trend. Large commercial feedlots forced this acceptance through preference for crossbred feeder cattle. A well developed crossbreeding technology in this country has helped.

Other reasons cited were highly developed artificial insemination programs and easy communication and transportation.

But despite the improvement of

established breeds and the sudden influx of the new ones, Riggs said the industry still suffers from one major bottleneck: Inability to break the 95 percent calf barrier, shorten the gestation period, or control the sex of the calf crop.

The professor said the exotic breeds attracting the most interest are big, growthy and muscular. Fast growth and muscling favor efficiency, but large size

hikes the maintenance requirement and hinders efficiency.

"These factors must be kept in mind in the evaluation of breeds and breeding programs if we are to maximize production per unit of land," he said. "We must not become obsessed with large size in breeding cattle."

A major problem in the beef industry stems from cattle changing ownership, Riggs said. Profit-

able cow-calf production requires a high percentage of heavy calves weaned.

But if the grower makes his cattle too heavy and then sells to the feedlot operator, the latter may object because he is unable to take advantage of feedlot gains, the speaker pointed out. This situation tends to work against top total efficiency by discouraging optimum continuous growth and

finishing to slaughter weight.

"If growing and finishing are profitable operations in themselves, it seems logical that at least the better organized and financed ranchmen could improve their profit position by retaining ownership of their cattle until slaughter. Some are custom feeding their own cattle, buying others, and hedging to protect their position," Riggs said.

On a short term basis, improving beef cattle may seem a simple way to provide for increasing requirements. But he said adoption of the practice without control will undoubtedly hamper development of the domestic beef industry, thereby throwing more demand on foreign sources.

About 300 ranchers, feedlot operators and animal scientists attended the short course.

High school program will include Science

The Superior High School Student Program initiated last September at Texas A&M by the Liberal Arts College will be expanded this fall to include the College of Science.

Announcement of the expansion was issued jointly by Dr. W. David Maxwell, Liberal Arts dean, Dr. John M. Prescott, Science dean.

"This expansion will provide a greater variety of college courses for academically-talented students chosen in the Bryan and Consolidated High Schools," they said.

Since last September, 28 outstanding Bryan and College Station students have attended regularly scheduled classes in the College of Liberal Arts.

This year, participating students will be allowed to choose from course offerings in the College of Science as well.

Students selected for participation in the program receive high school credit for the college course work. The Superior High School Student Program is administered by the Honors Program Office of the Liberal Arts College.

Interested students should contact their high school counselor for further details.

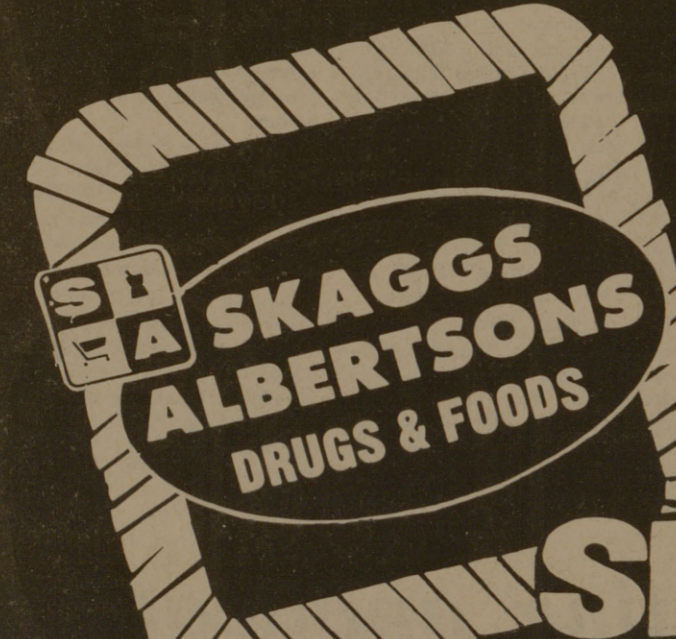
A&M gets \$300 from C of C

A \$300 scholarship was presented to Texas A&M University's College of Engineering Tuesday by B-CS Chamber of Commerce President Joe Sawyer.

The annual scholarship rotates among the university's nine academic colleges, Sawyer said, and represents the chamber's appreciation to the university.

Engineering Dean Fred J. Benson said the scholarship probably will be awarded to a junior college transfer.

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