

Professor researches problems

# Shipping cattle by rail studied

By PEGGY C. McCULLEN  
Battalion Reporter

The cost of shipping cattle by trucks is increasing with the rapidly climbing fuel prices. The result is higher costs at the meat counter.

One alternative method to truck hauling is shipping by rail and a Texas A&M University professor of animal science is researching this method.

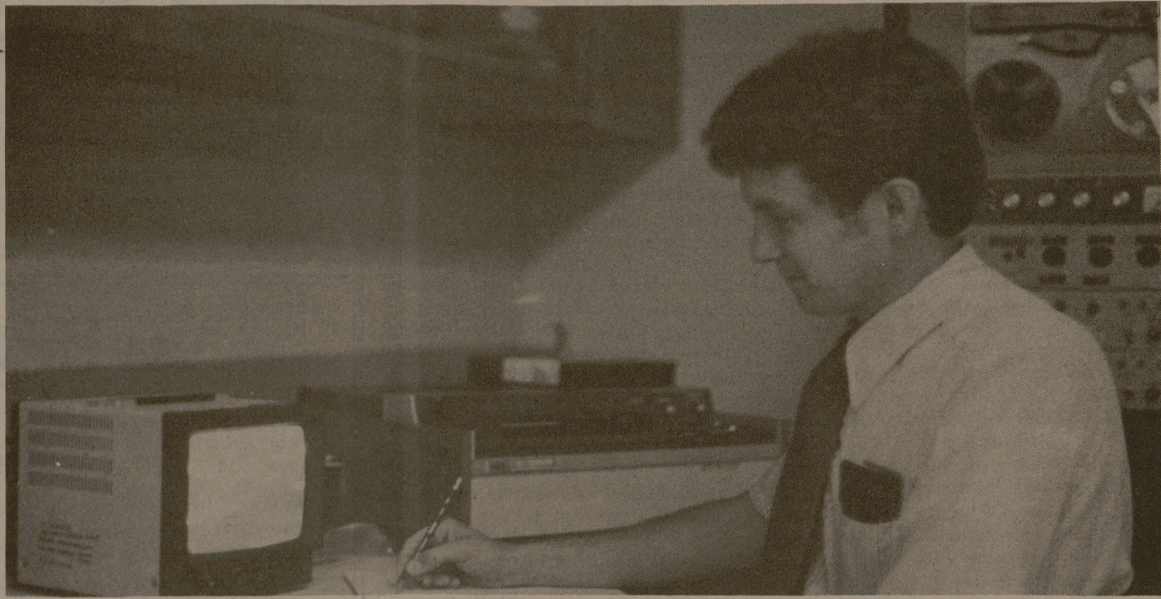
Dr. T. H. Friend, assistant professor of animal science, is participating in a USDA-Texas Agricultural Experiment Station funded research program which may put cattle back on trains.

Because of a 1906 Livestock Transportation Act, which says that livestock shipped by rail must be unloaded, watered, fed and rested for five hours every 28 hours, it has become unprofitable to ship cattle by rail.

According to Bill Gentleman in Calf News (May, 1979), the railroads hauled over 1.75 million car loads of livestock in 1916. Today, less than 12,000 car loads of livestock are hauled annually.

A self-contained jumbo cattle car that can transport cattle for long distances without rest stops, developed by Gentleman of Amarillo, is being tested.

Its profitability, the occurrence of shipping fever, and decreased stress and shrinkage of the animals is being evaluated.



Dr. T. H. FRIEND  
Battalion photo by Clay Cockrill

Friend, who began an animal behavior program at A&M in the fall of 1977, is studying the behavior of cattle in transit. USDA researchers monitor environmental conditions.

Friend uses video cameras in the double-decked rail cars equipped with water troughs and hay racks. Electrical generators, television monitors, and video tape recorders are operated through an adjacent

caboose.

The researchers ride in the caboose during the entire haul, up to five days.

Recently, Friend participated in a shipment of 163 cattle from Birmingham, Ala. to Little Rock, Ark. Friend said that during transit, cattle consumed the same amount of hay and water normally consumed in a feed lot.

"From the television monitoring equipment, we were able to tell that all cattle had ample opportunity to drink and to eat," he added. Researchers will begin another trip today, which will haul about 120 cattle from Memphis to Amarillo in three days. The trip will determine optimum space requirements and movement patterns needed in the cattle cars.

# Fuel shortage will change eating as well as driving habits

The fuel crunch may change as many eating habits as driving habits, says a leading energy authority.

Texas A&M University Dean of Geosciences Earl Cook predicts large changes in American diets over the next two generations, primarily because of energy's effects on food production.

"Increasingly cheap and abundant energy, mainly from fossil fuels, allowed us to mechanize agriculture, manufacture fertilizers and pes-

ticides, then refrigerate food and transport it quickly cross-country where marketers and consumers preserve food by canning, drying and freezing," explains Cook.

As fuel goes up, so will food prices and Americans will substitute milk, eggs and poultry for beef and seafood while consumption of beans will increase and use of frozen food will decrease, he forecasts.

Beef is like the automobile, argues Cook, noting that both are

symbols of affluence and represent inefficient systems.

"Of the energy in the plant food eaten by beef animals, less than 4 percent gets to the table in digestible form," he says.

Despite tough decisions on whether to buy chicken, pork or beef, consumers are likely to continue to buy coffee, Coca-Cola and beer, no matter the cost, thinks Cook.

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# Hit-and-run whale wrecks dream trip

United Press International

HALIFAX, Nova Scotia — A Canadian fishing boat picked up a 30-year-old Welshman trying to sail the Atlantic in a 17-foot inflatable dinghy, but whose dream voyage was foiled by a hit-and-run whale.

Canadian Coast Guard officials said Paul Parsons had been plucked from his dinghy about 40 nautical miles southeast of Halifax harbor by the Cape Pictou.

But another seaborne adventurer was fared better.

Kenneth Kerr, an oarsman trying to row across the Atlantic in the smallest craft ever used for such a voyage, is "bang on course" but well off schedule, a spokesman said Sunday.

Parson's rescue came six hours after authorities issued an all-ships

alert for Parsons, an Air Canada baggage handler at London's Heathrow Airport, who set out from Halifax Friday to sail his craft, the Puffa, 2,800 miles to Europe.

The blue-eyed, bearded Parsons stocked the dinghy with food and 30 gallons of fresh water to sustain him on the trip he thought would take him two months.

Parsons had radioed that a whale had smashed into his raft, damaging the floorboards and throwing some supplies overboard.

The coast guard said the ship was expected at its home port of Lunenburg, Nova Scotia, June 26 or 27.

Radio operators determined Kerr had rowed only 120 miles in the last eight days — far short of his 30 mile-a-day target.

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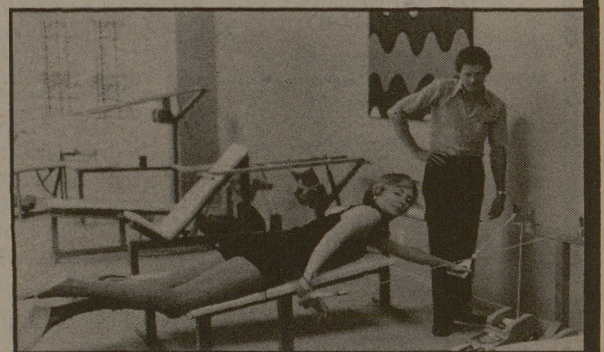
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