

Ag. Eco. course teaches techniques

By KELLI PROCTOR

A new agricultural economics course is bringing today's computer technology to students — from undergraduates to the Texas A&M University System's second-highest agriculture official.

In the course, students learn to analyze problems and situations they will encounter in the real world, said Dr. Kerry Litzenberg, an assistant professor in the agricultural economics department at Texas A&M University.

Litzenberg, who is teaching the experimental course in agricultural computer use for the first time this spring, said the students analyze various topics.

One example might be vehicle cost analysis, he said. The computer gives the student a list of questions, then the student obtains results of the analysis by answering the questions.

"The programs run themselves, and anyone can learn

how to run the computers," Litzenberg said.

Litzenberg said he knew there was hope in the future for his computer class when he found that one of his students was Dr. O. D. Butler, Texas A&M's associate deputy chancellor for agriculture.

"The class is great, and obviously something that is needed," Butler said.

A University system committee did a study recently and concluded that all Texas A&M students should have some computer background to graduate.

"I decided to take the course because I figured if students are required to have computer knowledge, the faculty should, too," Butler said.

The good thing about the computer class is students are able to use their agriculture and business background by writing programs that solve business problems, Litzenberg said.

For example, the student learns to program the computer

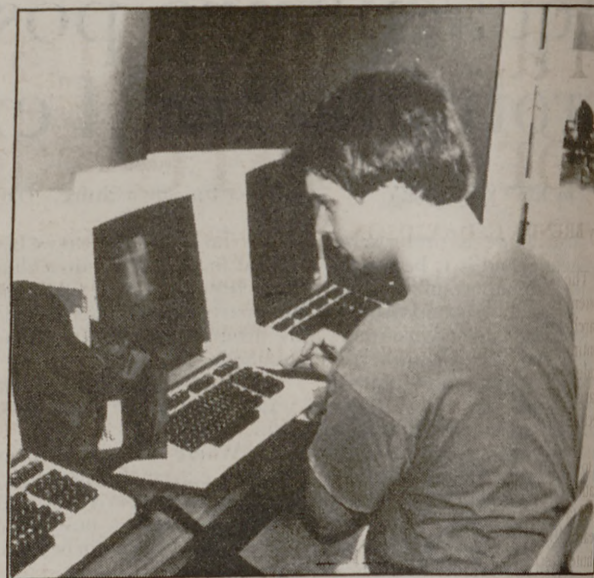
to tell the value of cattle in a feedlot or when to sell a cow for maximum profit, Litzenberg said.

Also, the class can see how the same type of computer is applied in different industries and fields, he said. Important ranchers and executives are invited to show how computers benefit their businesses.

The class is now offered as a special three-hour course, but will probably be offered regularly beginning next spring, Litzenberg said. A request for the course to be placed in the College of Agriculture curricula has been submitted to the Texas A&M University System Board of Regents.

Response from students has been encouraging, Litzenberg said, with the only problem being the tremendous demand for the class.

There are now 55 students enrolled, and more were turned down than were accepted, he said. Next fall, about 120 junior



An agricultural economics student finishes some homework on one of the computers on the second floor of the Agriculture Building. The system was recently installed specifically for use in a special problems class.

and senior agricultural economics students will be able to take the class.

There is a major difference between the computer in the agricultural economics department and other computers, Litzenberg said.

"Our computer is interactive," Litzenberg said. "That is, once a mistake is made, the computer interacts with the programmer and relays a message as to what is wrong."



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New variety in R.S.

By DAVID HATCH

In response to a need for people trained in the science of reclaiming badly damaged land areas, the Department of Range Science at Texas A&M University has created a new option of study.

"We are training people to revegetate areas in semi-arid environments that have been damaged by such things as overgrazing, mining or the sites of oil and gas exploration," said Christ-

opher Call, an associate professor of range science at Texas A&M.

The land reclamation option is a variation of the watershed management option. Reclamation majors take the basic range science curriculum, then a course in mining engineering, geology and soil science.

Potential employers for graduates of this program are federal and state agencies, private companies and consulting firms, Call said.

Energy producing companies, which are required by law in many areas to have a reclamation specialist on hand at production sites, are a major source of employment, he said. An individual entering the field can expect a starting pay between \$18,000 and \$20,000 with a bachelor's degree and about \$25,000 with a master's.

There are 10 students now in the land reclamation option, which has been offered for less than a year, Call said.



TAMU RANGE SCIENCE CLUB

Meeting 2nd Tuesday of each Month
7 p.m. Rm. 112 O&M Bldg.
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