

Prof tries to meet demand for donkeys

by Karen Wallace
Battalion Reporter

Dr. Tex Taylor, associate professor of Veterinary Large Animal Medicine and Surgery at Texas A&M, says he is trying to build up better donkey stock for people who are interested in breeding quality mules.

A growing interest in mules as recreational and work animals is creating a need to provide better quality horses and donkeys, Taylor said Tuesday.

"A mule is a hybrid," he said. "Its mother is a horse and its father is a donkey." The better quality horse and donkey available, the better quality mule produced.

Taylor said although the utilization of mules is not new, people are interested in using mules as recreational animals — like horses — and as work animals in mule teams.

"Some people who a few years ago would've used a tractor to do their chores will use a team of mules today," Taylor said.

"The advantage of a mule team is economic," he said. Although a tractor costs about the same as the purchase and upkeep of a team of mules, a mule team can perform a wider variety of chores, he said.

For about the last ten years, Taylor said he and his wife have traveled all over the country trying to put together a herd of donkeys. He has used the latest procedures in veterinary medicine on them in hopes of getting the quality stock he desires.

"My goal is to produce good quality in big numbers," Taylor said. The stock he has now is not near what it needs to be, as far as shape and size, he said.

"It will take a few years to come up with a good stock," he said. Taylor hopes to have the quality donkey stock he wants in about 10 years.

There has recently been a good demand for work stock abroad, Taylor said. Some of the South American and Asian countries use mule teams because technologically they are 70 years behind the United States and don't have the education to manage technical machinery.



Don't ask how we do it

staff photo by Brenda Davidson

Bob Rumbarger, left, a business major, and Mickey Peters, a physical engineering major, hold up their end of a pushing exercise in B-2. Both are sophomores from Eagle Pass.

New accounting system regulates computer use

by Stephanie M. Ross

Battalion Staff

Even though there are no more bonuses or "happy hours" as a result of a new accounting system for the use of computers by students, there shouldn't be problems for students completing course work, Dr. Bruce McCormick, the new department head of computer science, said.

Happy hour was a time when students using the computer could do work at a lesser cost than usual. This allowed them to save part of the money allocated to them to work on their programs throughout the semester.

"To my perspective, it was no system that anyone could ever plan because the rates were inde-

terminant," McCormick said. "This year the data processing center uses a hard cash basis for the machines."

"When new rules were made up, the problems of groups who made significant use of happy hour and bonuses weren't looked at," he said. He added that as time goes on, the department will look at the problems and try to either redistribute money or change the rates on the machines to solve the problems.

Right now the center is running at the same rate in terms of resources per student as last year, he said, but earlier, when the money was being allocated to the department there was a shortage — there were only enough funds to run the system at 40 percent of the

resources they had last year.

"Obviously those resources were there last year, and obviously they were being paid for — nothing has changed that much," McCormick said.

He said that this is not a funding problem, but probably an accounting problem that will be taken care of, and said he is not very worried about it since the system presently is running at a rate equivalent to last year.

"It's just that the transition to a new accounting system for that data processing center was so abrupt and so difficult to estimate that we ended up with inadequate resources," McCormick said.

"Right now we're running at the same resources per student as last year," he said.

McCormick said he sees the new accounting system merely as a "patch" on a larger problem that will need an overall solution and he already has begun looking into the problem.

In an age when the technology of electronics and computers is changing and developing so rapidly, it is difficult for anyone to keep up, he said. McCormick said the centralized computer system is outdated, and he hopes to change to a new, less centralized system within three years.

McCormick said he hopes to get new equipment with the highest teaching potential for the students, so they will be able to learn more up-to-date methods than are available on the current centralized system.

Temporary crash barriers do well in safety testing

by Wanda Winkler

Battalion Staff

The Texas Transportation Institute, a research agency of the Texas A&M System, has completed its testing of a portable crash barrier designed to protect freeway maintenance crews in Houston.

TTI worked closely with the State Department of Highways and Public Transportation to produce a practical barrier, scheduled for use in October, Dr. Hayes E. Ross, research engineer of TTI, says.

The barrier, a 44-foot steel beam suspended between two trucks, was designed by Ross and Dr. W. Lynn Beason, assistant research engineer of TTI. During the tests at the University Research Annex, the barrier took a 50-mile per hour impact from a full-size car and received only a

three-inch deformation, Beason said.

Workers inside the barrier and car occupants are protected because cars are redirected upon impact, Ross said. The barrier is 27 inches high — the standard height of guardrails.

"It's easy to transport, install and move up and down the freeway," Ross said. "You pull it like a trailer."

Before work on the barrier began, in a period of a year, 12 Houston road crew workers were killed when they were struck by vehicles, highway officials said.

"It's designed to solve problems the highway department faces," Ross said. He and Beason discussed and analyzed barriers of different lengths and strengths to develop a practical, serviceable design. Workers can set up the structure in about 10 to 15 minutes,

Beason said.

Although the barrier project still is in an experimental stage, Ross said he thinks it will be used and accepted. The degree of use will depend on its performance in Houston. Each new barrier will cost less than \$10,000 excluding the cost of the trucks, Beason said.

Another TTI research project is being conducted by John Strybos, a civil engineering graduate student. Strybos has been testing an emergency gate for concrete freeway barriers that provides emergency vehicles access to van pool and bus freeway lanes.

Damon Buffington and Dean Sicking, civil engineering graduate students, have been developing a crash cushion to place at the end of concrete barriers. A crash cushion is a device that will stop a vehicle safely in a short distance. Ross said TTI benefits the Uni-

versity and the state through its graduate research programs.

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