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Fort Hays Officials Defend Farm Operation

Jerry Fetterolf

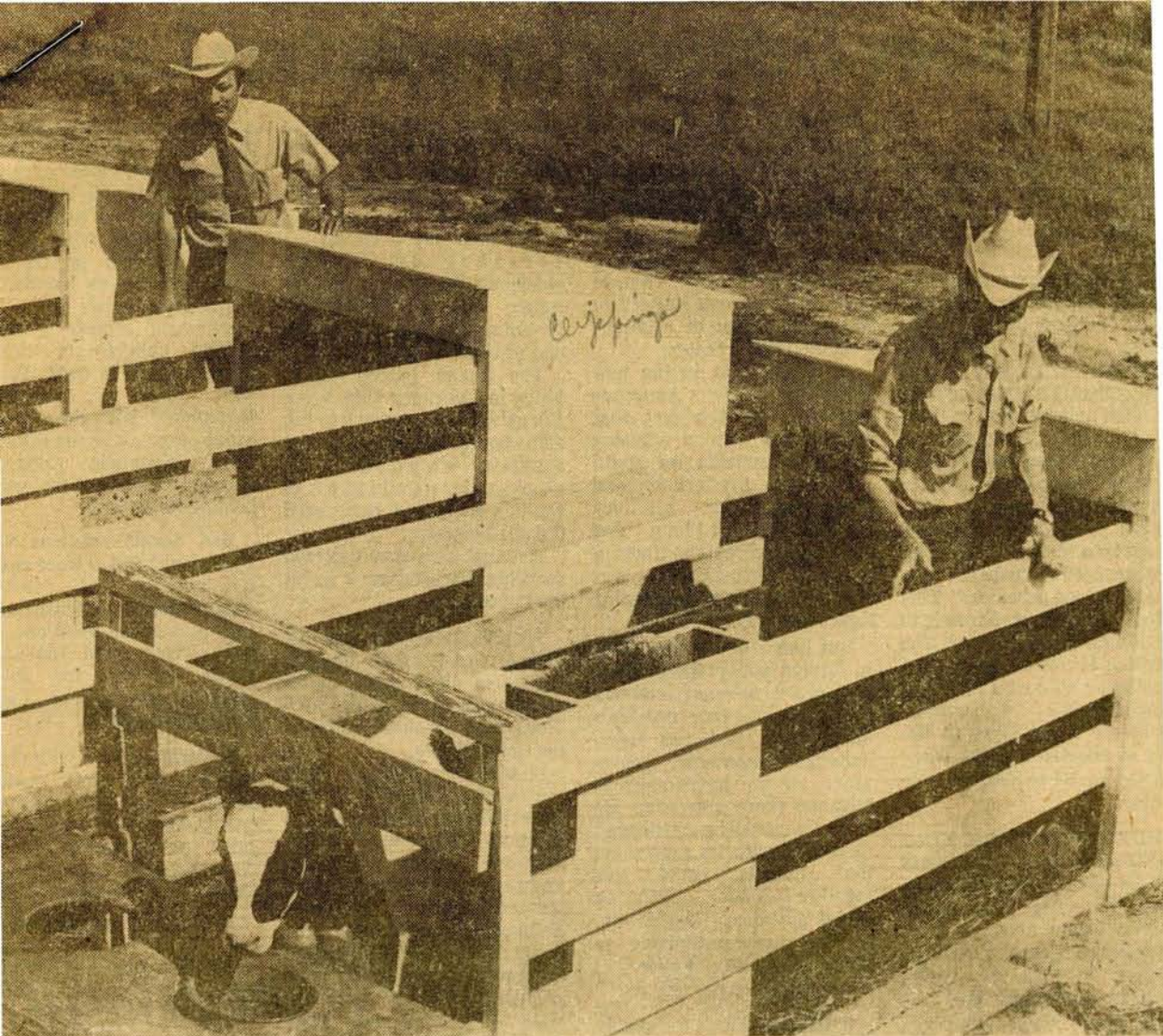
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Staff Photo

DAIRY REPLACEMENT HEIFERS TENDED AT FORT HAYS FACILITY
 ... Dr. Duane Sharp and Al Graff look over calves produced in the dairy operations ...

Fort Hays Officials Defend Farm Operation as Working Laboratory

By JERRY FETTEROLF
 Eagle Agriculture Writer

Hays, Kan. — Officials of Fort Hays Kansas State College here believe operation of the 3,825 - acre "college farm" is a valuable teaching tool and well within the law authorizing the college in 1902.

Defense of the farm operation came after W. Keith Weltmer, legislative post auditor, earlier this month said Kansas could save \$183,260 (about \$48 an acre) by discontinuing the Fort Hays state farm operation.

The post auditor was named by the 1971 legislature to act as a watch dog to see that taxpayers are receiving full value for their tax dollars.

DEFENDING the school were Dr. Walter Keating, vice president for financial affairs; Dr. Duane Sharp, farm superintendent, and Ron Pflughoft, executive director for the alumni association who becomes assistant to the president July 1.

Keating said it was his understanding Weltmer had used a figure of \$48 as a likely per acre income from the land on the old military reservation. He also said he



KEATING, PFLUGHOFT, SHARP
 ... Three defend "college farm" for Hays ...

understands all state schools are likely to come under closer scrutiny by the post auditor.

The grant for the college to assume control of the land came in 1901 when Congress

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authorized the 7,600 - acre Fort Hays military lands be given to Kansas educational institutions. Part of the military reservation was given to Kansas State University to establish an experiment station.

PART WAS GIVEN to the Kansas State Normal School for establishing a western branch of the normal school system. The remainder, a 177 acre area near Big Creek at the south edge of Hays, and the building area of the abandoned fort, were set aside as a park site.

The Fort Hays Branch Experiment Station still operates its 3,200 acres, plus 480 acres it has leased the past several years from FHKSC.

FHKSC campus is situated on the old military reserve, and highways and other improvements have trimmed some acreage from the original grant as school size increased.

The original congressional act signed into law by President William McKinley March 28, 1900, requires that whenever designated use of land ceases, the land reverts to United States control.

For several years after the college was begun as a two-year normal school June 23, 1902, the farm and rangeland was rented to farmers and settlers of the area.

The college farm now has 85 Holstein dairy cows with an average production of 17,000 pounds of milk per head annually, almost double the state's average for commercial dairy cows. They also have 180 head of commercial Hereford beef cattle, and 50-60 head of brood sows in a hog production operation.

The dairy furnishes all milk for the school dormitories and sells the remainder as

commercial production. The beef herd calves are finish fed and slaughtered for income. The commercial hog operation was begun a year ago.

The farm showed a net income on the profit side of the ledger until two years ago, when state regulations no longer allowed colleges to lease machinery. The forced buying of machinery put the college farm into a loss situation costing about \$23,500 the past two years.

COLLEGE officials said that since there are 200 students enrolled for agriculture degrees at the school and that agricultural classes served a total of 529 students the past year, this is probably the cheapest education per credit hour offered by any college.

Dr. Duane Sharp, farm superintendent, said the total land area is about evenly divided between plowland and

pasture land. There have been no new building activities at the farm for many years.

Main benefit of the farm is to provide practical application of agricultural learning on the farm itself. Dairy students work at least one week full time each semester in the dairy operation where they learn dairy cow nutrition, mechanical operation of dairy equipment, health care of dairy cattle, and handling of sanitation and pasteurizing equipment.

A typical year was 1967 when gross income from the farm was \$108,495.77, while expenses totaled \$80,745.84 leaving a net income of \$27,749.93.

"We believe that our program is complimentary to the one at K-State and not in competition with it," Pflughoft, executive director of the school's alumni association, said.