

## Farming: A challenging lifestyle

"I recently purchased a farm. How do I get into beef?"

"Can I get some information on your courses for new farmers?"

"What can I do with the fields on my new farm?"

Each year, the University of Guelph receives literally thousands of similar inquiries by telephone, letter and in person. Guelph's proximity to Ontario's "Golden Horseshoe" and the University's reputation in agriculture bring many an aspiring farmer to campus. All are seeking some kind of assistance with their hobby or with their dreams of becoming a full-time farmer and, invariably, they end up discussing their hopes and problems with the faculty of the Ontario Agricultural College.

Professor Gary Hutchison, co-ordinator of agriculture courses for the Office of Continuing Education and himself a part-time farmer, also sees a fair share of these aspiring farmers in his office. It was Prof. Hutchison who, six years ago, perceived the need for a program of studies tailor-made for this new breed of farmer, the "back-to-the-lander" whom some have called the gentleman or city farmer. Since the inception of the Applied Agriculture program, over 6,000 novice farmers have received advice and guidance in sorting out fact from fiction in the operation of modern, often small-scale farms.

"It's not our goal to encourage or discourage part-time farming," says Prof. Hutchison. "It is our objective, however, to present the realistic, technical and economic facts of farming to the novice, facts which may discourage him and keep him forever an armchair farmer."

Others obviously become better equipped and more enthusiastic than ever. A few even make "the big jump". Four years ago, a computer specialist got involved in the rabbit industry and is now one of the most knowledgeable breeders in his field. His production will reach 5,000 "print-outs" this year alone, all destined for Ontario supermarkets. Many students never intend to farm, but enrol because they live in the country and want to understand and communicate better with their farm neighbors.

No one is overlooked as a potential student. The matronly-looking librarian or the frail, elderly English teacher are as much a part of the novice farmer student population as the firefighter or robust truck driver. According to Prof. Hutchison, "several music teachers are strong advocates of our program, but in the individual professions engineers surpass all others in numbers followed closely by physicians."

Roughly half of the participants come from the professions, followed by business and management. Armed forces, policemen, social workers, taxi drivers and skilled tradesmen constitute the balance.

These students, however, can not really be classified according to occupation, age or social status. The stylish wife of the general manager of a large corporation just might be the principal tractor driver; an actress may be nursemaid to sick animals on a part-time farm.

Seven faculty members have enrolled at one time in the same class and two members of the University's (Continued on page 7)



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73 Acres of land with bank barn, approximately 40 acres of good workable land, balance is mostly cedars with pond sites. An ideal location for your hobby farm just 20 minutes from Georgetown and close to paved road. Asking \$87,500. Call Norm Sinclair.

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