

This farm specializes in research

There is a farm in Halton Hills unlike any other in this municipality which is noted for its exceptional farms.

Its 150 acres are farmed year round by 13 hands and in the summer months, it takes on four students as extra help although the first of that extra help came when spring was only a month old. One of the help is a university graduate and three hold college diplomas.

Besides a two-storey red brick farmhouse, it has two greenhouses, two swine barns, five poultry barns, one it rents out and one which serves as an administration building. A corral is under construction to contain a 40-head cattle herd the farm is adding to its operation after starting from scratch, so to speak, nine years ago.

What distinguishes this farm from the others is the large sign at its Trafalgar Road entrance which says "Research".

"There's not really that much difference," says Tage (pronounced: Tay) Nielsen, 26, who operates the farm for Maple Leaf Mills.

Nielsen first worked as help on the farm in 1972 and '73 before returning to Denmark to finish agricultural college. Since graduation, 18 months ago, Nielsen is what today is called a farm manager and lives with his wife of six months in the farm house. His own farm, "a hobby farm", he says, is in Grand Valley.

As a research farmer, though, Nielsen gets a lot more visitors than the average, and many of those visitors are themselves farmers who at a balance can spot the banes of their livelihood: weeds and dirt in barns. And because it is a year round farm the visitors come year round too although in the winter the visits taper off to one or two a month.

One of the things it means is that though the lawns surrounding the rear barns are not as lush as those close to the

roads, where every passing person can see them, they must be kept just as weed free.

What visitors see is not a model farm in the sense that it has the latest in automation including the ubiquitous computer.

"We're not as automatic in some senses," says Nielsen, "because we're experimental." He goes on to say that the farm is a "seed and feed" operation. Record keeping is of the nominal kind and not computerized—"not yet," says Nielsen.

Like any farmer, Nielsen's duties consist in making sure the fields get planted, the machines are working, "fix and weld everything", and do what he can to co-ordinate the workload and ensure a "smooth running operation" he says.

The competitive edge added by a world-wide market place—Europe, North Africa, North and South America—is intensified by the need to continually be producing better

seed and feed to meet the demand of all the world's appetite. In corn, for instance, Nielsen says you have to get four variety licences each year of operation just to stay on top.

But the basic challenge in research farming "is to get better plants to produce more and help fight food shortages in the world," Nielsen says. As an example, he tells of trying to develop a grass which could grow in Iceland, or in northern Canada. "More can be done about that," he says.

"Or maybe we could develop disease resistant crops for countries where the best soil and climate are but have bugs."

How does farming here compare with Denmark?

"Danish farms are hard to compare with Canadian farms," replies Nielsen.

"Feed Farming today just about needs a PhD," he says. "Over there a farmer grows his own feed and makes his own diet."

Another comparison, and one close to the farmer's heart and pocketbook, is the price of land. "Farms are more expensive there," Nielsen says. When he left in 1974 the mortgage rate was 18 percent although that has since dropped to 12 percent.

Nielsen recalls also that on graduation day at the agricultural college in Denmark, the college teacher told the graduating class not to buy farms, the first time he had ever so advised a graduating class.

There is less tax, too, in Canada than there is in Denmark, Nielsen says. Over there 42 percent of his income was taxed.

In the seed end of the farm there are small plots of alfalfa, timothy and broom grasses. Nielsen points to one.

"We got three crops of alfalfa off one plot," he says. "We would have had four."

He points to another plot where, he says, the alfalfa has survived four winters. After three more winters, those plants still surviving will be harvested for their hardy seed. "It takes five years to get an alfalfa variety licence," Nielsen says.

Separating the test plots are small fields of barley and winter wheat.

With the exception of the barn where the turkeys are the barns for layers and broilers are kept at a constant 68 degrees on the Fahrenheit thermometer and have observation rooms from where visitors view the fowl. This is a precaution so that someone visiting from a distant place cannot accidentally contaminate the flocks with a disease clinging to pant cuffs or shoe soles.

Of the 12 different rations fed to the layers, with the purpose in mind of producing a better egg through diet, only one will make it to the feed store, Nielsen says. The eggs produced from 3,600 hens are shipped to market and end up on your grocer's refrigerator

meats.

In the barns for the broilers—"The Kentucky Fried Chicken bird," Nielsen says—there are rolls of paper beneath the cages enclosing the birds to help ease the daily task of cleaning the barns, all of them. And whenever a barn is completely emptied of its crop, the entire area is cleaned and disinfected.

Over in the Broiler Breeder barn, 1500 birds are kept in 50 pens where anywhere from two to five roosters per pen keep the hens company. Nielsen estimates that the farm "gets back maybe one crop a year" here. He says that the various pens of birds are fed different feed to produce a better hatching percentage which now is "around 80 percent."

Between the poultry barns and the swine buildings, Nielsen points out where four corrals are being built, each to contain ten head of cattle. Two of the corrals will hold Holsteins, Nielsen says, and two will hold mixed breeds and all will be fed different feed mixtures.

In the swine buildings, Nielsen casts a more critical eye on the animals, perhaps because he specialized in swine at agricultural college. Here, purebred boars are bred to 20 sows each. After the sows are bred, they are kept penned during the 114-day gestation period. On or about the 104th day the sows are washed and disinfected, Nielsen says, adding that the pens are

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TAGE NIELSEN, "A farmer today has to be an intelligent businessman."



DREW MARKHAM pours feed into a turkey feeder.

Penny sale winners

The outstanding turnout for the fund-raising Penny Sale held by the ladies' division of the North Halton Golf Club last Wednesday night illustrated the popularity of the annual event.

The new facilities at the Golf Club provided plenty of space for the prizes to be displayed. Tables were filled with items worth about \$5, set beside paper cups in which participants placed one cent tickets to qualify them as winners.

Club President Bill McNally and Ladies' President Vi Clapp were kept busy with the responsibilities of ticket drawing and announcing over a hundred winners: W. Reynolds, K. Golinaki, B. Baines, E. Clapp, M. McGilvary, K. Golinaki, E. Wilson, Vi Cochrane, M. Archer, S. Duncan, M. Inglis, B. Embling, D. Mann, E. Feruchs, V. Schenk Sr., J. Dowd, A. Taylor, P. Ridley, J. Crichton;

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W. Kirk, V. Landria, J. Gage, H. Bell, D. Currie, D. Hamilton and S. McDonald.

Some of these lucky winners won more than one prize. The special raffles for a toaster oven and a refreshment basket were awarded to M. Furlong and J.R. Barber respectively.

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