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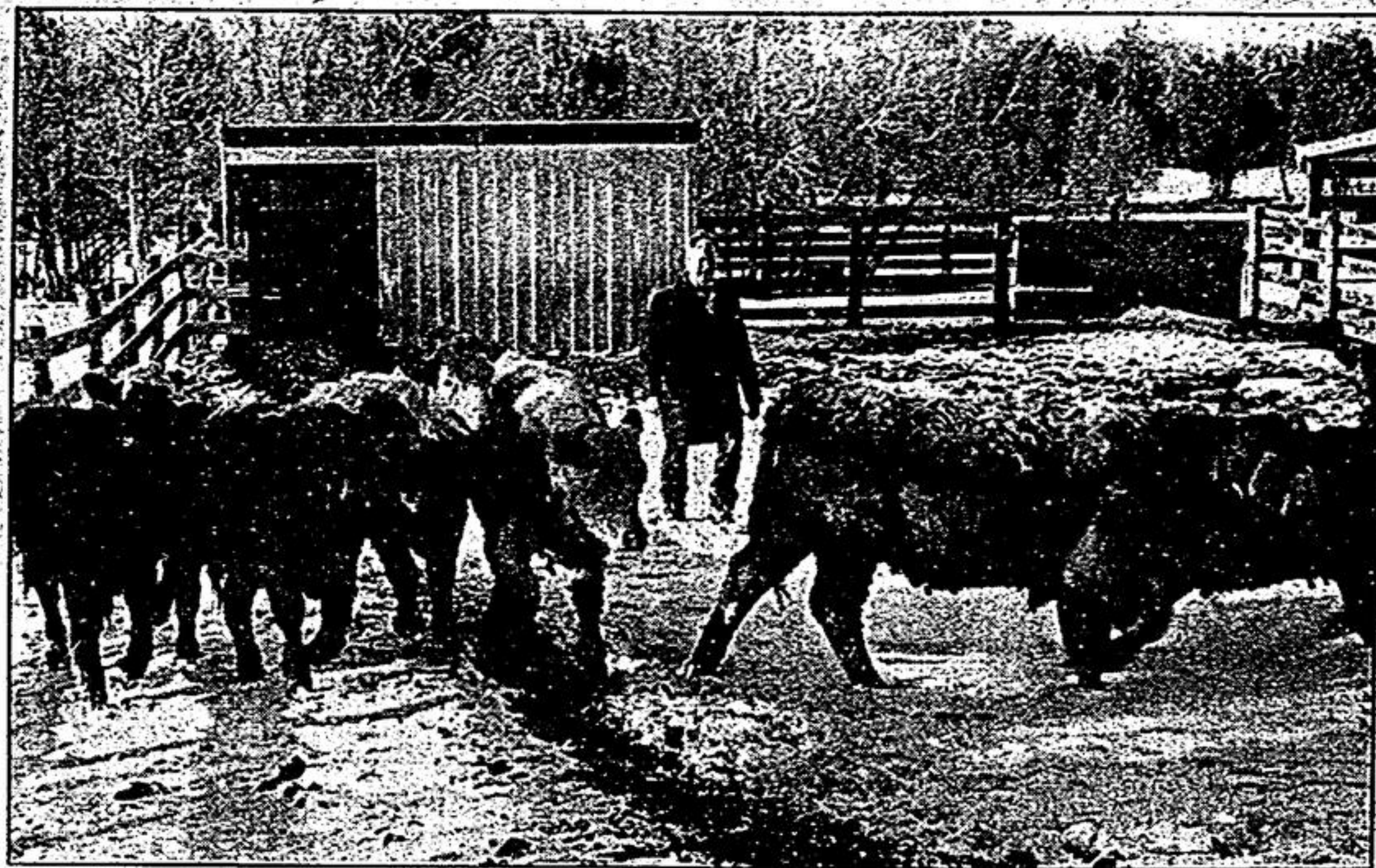
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Although relatively new to the cattle business, Franz Henke, shown here with part of his herd, is already using innovative approaches to breeding and raising cattle. — Erkki Pohjolainen

## Newcomer making his mark in cattle breeding

By ERKKI POHJOLAINEN  
Though Franz Henke and family are relatively new to the beef business, starting in 1985, they have definite plans for the industry's future.

These ideas include selective breeding for multiple births and utilizing feeds other than corn.

Members of the Ontario County Cattlemen's Association are impressed with his work. This is Franz' second year as director of the local organization.

Franz and wife Eva, with help from their children, operate High Oak Ranch Ltd., on the 4th Conc. of Uxbridge, north of Goodwood.

"I don't believe you can afford only one calf, per cow, per year," the 53-year-old innovator said in a recent interview.

His goal is to produce a strain of cattle in which twinning is a common occurrence.

Since 1957, High Oak Ranch has produced small animals for pets and research, selling 300,000 hamsters, guinea pigs, rats, mice and gerbals per year. They draw on this experience to meet their goal.

Franz has 84 cows-in-calf out of a herd of 115 Simmental cattle. He anticipates 10 per cent of these will produce twins.

The provincial average of calves produced per cow annually is approximately 0.7. If Franz meets his target, his production for this year will be at a rate of 1.1 to 1.

In 10 years he hopes to be able to produce calves at a two to one ratio.

Franz explains: "Before we went into the beef business, we researched various farming operations."

They selected cattle production because their experience with genetics would allow them to prosper. "Beef producers were far behind hog and chicken farmers in fast-growth research."

Franz criticizes cattlemen as being too dependent on corn for feed.

"Corn is too risky and expensive. Bad weather can ruin a crop and the yield isn't that high," he explained.

For 10 years, Franz has been experimenting with Jerusalem artichoke, or "sunchokes" as he calls them. This plant is rich in protein, produces potato-like tubers underground, and the tops can be used for silage. As well, this plant can survive temperatures of minus 30 degrees and cattle like it.

Though still studying sunchokes, Franz is determined that it will be the sole feed for his cattle in the future.

With twinning and the new feed, Franz is determined to meet his goal of producing 1,000 pounds of beef per cow per year. The average in Ontario is between 300 and 350 pounds.

Franz and Eva Henke operate 400 acres, of which most is used for forage. The family farm includes 100 acres. The remainder is rented.

The experimental sunchoke crop is grown on part of a rented 240-acre farm at the Pickering Airport site. Twenty-two-year-old Franz Jr. will live there after graduating from Guelph University this month.

The cattle and small animals are kept at the Uxbridge location where Franz and Eva reside. One of their daughters, Franzis, 24, drives to the farm daily to work with the small animals.

Their oldest daughter, Joy, 27, is assistant credit manager at the Royal York Hotel, Toronto, and the youngest, Silke, 19, attends York University.

Franz started the small animal business shortly after immigrating here from Germany.

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