

## Allee Memorial Research and Demonstration Farm: A Brief History

H. L. Self (deceased)  
Mark Honeyman, coordinator  
ISU Research and Demonstration Farms

George M. Allee created the Allee Memorial Experimental Farm in 1958 through a bequest. Allee's will designated his "home" farm (160 acres) to be deeded to Iowa State University and be "...operated and maintained and used for the development and improvement of various agricultural products..." and further, "...the objectives should include the use and demonstration of advanced and modern methods of farming so that it would in fact be a help and guide to practical and successful farming operations."

The ISU Allee Farm leased a 40-acre tract and an 88-acre tract from the Newell American Legion from 1958 until 2004.

Allee maintained a profound interest over the years in the development and testing of corn. He left some of his genetic lines with instructions for them to be used if they would fit into the ISU corn-breeding program. Corn yield test plots were established on the farm in 1959 as a part of a network of test sites throughout the state. Although the actual acreage occupied by these plots was small, they provided valuable information on this major crop.

Several types of research and demonstration activities have prevailed at the farm since its inception in 1958. In addition to the economic study on farm size and the corn yield test plots, a feedlot management study with steers was started in 1961. H.L. Self, former coordinator of the Iowa State Research and Demonstration Farms, was a leader in the feedlot work.

The original six lots used in the feedlot management research were expanded to 10 lots in 1963 and a building to provide shelter for cattle and an area for a cattle scale was erected in 1964. The number of lots was as high as 22, of which 10 were in total confinement. The original six lots were used for testing the benefits of overhead shelter and of concrete as a feedlot surface. The results from these tests in the early 1960s were quite useful to farmer feeders throughout northwest Iowa, especially regarding the merits of shelter and concrete paving.

The scope of the feedlot management studies was broadened over the years to involve: confinement feeding, feedlot cable fences, recycling liquid manure from a lagoon back to the soil, oxidation ditch for manure digestion, shipment of feeder and slaughter cattle, comparison of grain storage systems, chemical preservation of high moisture grain, sudangrass as supplementary summer pasture for cattle, manure handling systems, water consumption by cattle, and grain to roughage ratios in cattle rations.

Recently, the feedlot research has greatly reduced in scope, although beef cattle feeding continues on the farm. In 2007, ISU began to feed purebred Angus cattle at the Allee Farm from the ISU herd in southern Iowa. Interestingly, Allee was an avid breeder of Angus cattle.

A corn rootworm test plot area was started in the early 1970s. Starting in 1980 a tillage method study was initiated and carried out by county and area extension personnel. Tillage methods included moldboard, chisel, disc, till plant, and no-till comparisons.

A large-scale farming systems project was started in 1986 that compared integrated management crop rotations. In the 1980s, swine returned to the Allee Farm. Work has focused on alternative production techniques including pasture farrowing, bedded hoop barns and winter farrowing. The Allee Farm is a member of the Niman Ranch Pork system, a niche pork company, and has received awards for pork quality.

The Allee Farm is well connected to the 4-H and FFA programs in Newell, Buena Vista County, and northwest Iowa. Through school-to-work programs, swine projects, gardens, and an orchard, the Allee Farm continues to reach many area youth.

In 1989, ISU and Newell Historical Society signed a long-term agreement turning the Allee mansion over to the society for management and restoration. The mansion was renovated and added on to in order to return it to its original splendor. The mansion has become a working museum and community center. It was listed on the National Registry of Historic Places in 1992 and brings hundreds of visitors to the farm.

The ISU Allee Research and Demonstration Farm continues to meet the guidance of George Allee's will by showing "advanced and modern methods of farming." Thousands of visitors have come to the Allee Farm over the last 50 years to learn about history and agriculture for the betterment of themselves and their communities.