

MILITARY FARMS SHUT DOWN AFTER 132 YEARS

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This photo from February 1957 shows a Shahiwal cow judged the best among military farm animals. The Hindu Archives

Military farms have been closed after 132 years of service, the Army said. The formal closing ceremony was held on Wednesday to mark the occasion.

“All the officers and workers have been redeployed within the Ministry to continue providing service to the organisation,” the Army said. There have been several recommendations in the past to shut down the farms.

In 2012, the Quarter Master General branch had recommended their closure. In December 2016, the Lt. Gen. D.B. Shekatkar (retd.) committee, which was appointed to recommend measures to enhance combat capability and rebalance defence expenditure of the armed forces, said the same.

The farms were set up with the sole requirement of supplying hygienic cow milk to troops in garrisons across British India. The first military farm was raised on February 1, 1889, at Allahabad.

Post-Independence, they flourished with 30,000 heads of cattle in 130 farms all over India. They were even established in Leh and Kargil in the late 1990s.

For more than a century, the farms supplied 3.5 crore litres of milk and 25,000 tonnes of hay yearly.

“It is credited with pioneering the technique of artificial insemination of cattle and introduction of organised dairying in India, providing yeoman service during the 1971 war, supplying milk at the Western and Eastern war fronts as well as during the Kargil operations to the Northern Command,” the Army said.

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