

**Pork Chop Farm**

# Hog Farming with the Folkers

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Farm Feature Writer

There's an old adage that says "If you can't lick them, join them."

Tony Folker, New Holland RD2, being in Earl Township in the area between routes 340 and 23, was constantly besieged with tourists wanting to see his piggery so in 1969 he decided to open it to visitors and charge a small admission. Although he had some apprehensions about admitting the public, due to the possibility of disease being carried into his swine herd, he has had no repercussions.

The name of his tourist attraction is Pork Chop Farm. Last year 6,000 people paid admission to see the hundreds of live baby pigs. It is real. It's educational. There is no attempt to play up the Amish. Tourists or local visitors can see the whole operation. They see not only all sizes of little pigs but the brood sows, boars and whatever is going on there at the time such as breeding and farrowing.

Tony's father, Jim, handles the tourists. He explains the operation, how to raise pigs, and pork in general. He gives all tourists two free brochures put out by the National Pork Council. They give facts about pork and preparing it, also recipes. This is done to promote pork.

To reach Pork Chop Farm from Lancaster, go east on route 340 to about two miles beyond Intercourse. Turn left on New Holland Road. Proceed two and one-half miles to Lowry Road. Turn right on Lowry Road and it is the first place on the right. It

There is a two-acre picnic grove with five picnic tables and toilets which is free to their visitors.

There is the added attraction of a pony for children to ride for a nominal fee. They extend group rates to tour buses, schools, clubs, churches and other organizations. Groups should call or write for reservations. They do ask that ag students and farmers wear clean clothes.

Folkers keep about 130 sows and gilts and eight boars in their herd. There are five groups of sows (16 sows in a group) that rotate farrowing. Each group of sows is turned loose with the

that are slightly slanted toward a middle slotted area. The concrete section where the automatic water fountains are is flushed with water to clean it. The manure is handled in liquid form from two pits. Tony is careful to spread it when the wind is not blowing toward houses. For the number of hogs raised here it is surprising how little odor there is. Just a slight covering of shavings is used sometimes for the rest area of the nursery to encourage the little pigs to sleep in that section.

As the newly weaned group is placed in the nursery, each



Edith Folker removes a fresh pork roast from her oven.

New boars are isolated for 60 days so that there is no danger of disease being transmitted. Tony is now constructing a barn to house 10 boars individually.

Folkers keep their own gilts for their herd. Their sows are three-way crosses. At least 99 per cent of their gilts have been their own. They feel they can control disease this way. They have almost eliminated scours. They don't use antibiotics and no additives are used in the feed. They use as little medicine as possible. They spent only \$20 in veterinary bills last year.

When the sows are farrowing Tony's father stays up till midnight if necessary and Tony gets up early.

Gehman Mill at Denver buys all the feeder pigs Folkers produce. They buy from 100 to 150 a month. Folkers don't finish any pigs themselves. Gehman finishes the pigs and sells to packing companies.

Pork Chop Farm is strictly a feeder pig operation with tourism a side line. They do not sell meat as the name might indicate, neither do they sell souvenirs. The farm has only five acres of which two acres is a picnic grove so no farming is done.

Tony became interested in raising pigs when he was 12 years old by having two 4-H pigs. A neighbor gave him a Yorkshire gilt for the beginning of his herd. He took the ag course and was in FFA at Garden Spot High School, graduating in 1965. He went into the U.S. Marine Corps after graduation but was soon released due to a shoulder injury.

Tony started an essay contest for ninth and tenth ag students at Garden Spot High School in 1971. It is called the "Tony L. Folker Gilt Award". In their essays they explain how they would raise a

gilt through her first litter. He judges them and selects the winning essay. This contest is held in April. He promises an eight-week-old gilt to the winner and the winner selects his own gilt from his herd. Last year he felt three boys' essays were so good he gave each of them a gilt.

Tony is a member of the Lancaster County Swine Producers. He helped measure and evaluate at their carcass show. This show is for members only. He is on the youth committee of the Pennsylvania Pork Council. He is a member of Garden Spot Young Farmers. He is a member of 340-23 Tourist Club which meets monthly at various attractions in Lancaster County. He and his wife attend their meetings. He is a member of the Lancaster County Tourist Bureau. His father goes to their meetings every month.

Tony is married to the former Edith Shelly. Her parents are Mr. and Mrs. Harold Shelley of Spring Garden, Salisbury Township. Edith graduated from Pequea Valley High School where she took the commercial course

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Mr. and Mrs. Tony Folker, Pork Chop Farm, hold a couple little pigs tourists will see after May 1.

previous one is moved to another section. They have 200 weaned pigs in the nursery and about 50 unweaned pigs in pens with their mothers. Each brood sow is in a wire crate and enough room is provided in her pen for her litter of pigs.

These 16 sows go out in the lot to eat once a day. The feed is put on concrete slabs. Folkers buy all their feed and grain, as well as alfalfa hay which is fed every other day because the pasture lot is small. The sows and boars drink out of the creek. Even in coldest winter the pigs break the ice to drink. While the sows are out Tony puts clean shavings in the pen. The farrowing section is heated electrically and infrared lamps are focused on the little pigs.

Tony goes to the mid-west for his boars. He has been using Yorkshire, Hampshire and Duroc for several years. Now he is also going to use Chester Whites. He gets the Hampshires in Missouri and Chester Whites in Illinois. He goes for fast growing and muscling hogs and information comes with them as to how long it takes them to develop. He brings them home in a horse trailer.

eight boars for three days for mating. They usually have 11 or 12 piglets and raise on the average 10. The little pigs are weaned at three weeks and put in the nursery.

The nursery has concrete floors



Mr. and Mrs. Tony Folker stand in front of some sows in pasture.

can also be reached by going east on route 23 from Lancaster. Turn right at the Gulf station in New Holland and drive south on Brimmer Avenue. Go three miles on New Holland Road to Lowry Road.

Pork Chop Farm is open every day from May 1 through mid-September from 10 or 11 A.M. until dark. From mid-September to October 1 it is open weekends only. They keep it open weekdays as long as the weather is nice.

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