

Champion hogs are no accident

By DIETER KRIEG

STEWARTSTOWN, Pa. — The main things to consider in coming up with good quality hogs are daily observation and dedication, according to John Strawbridge, who has been raising champion hogs for more than three decades. With that kind of experience behind him, and scores of championship ribbons to his credit, Strawbridge should know.

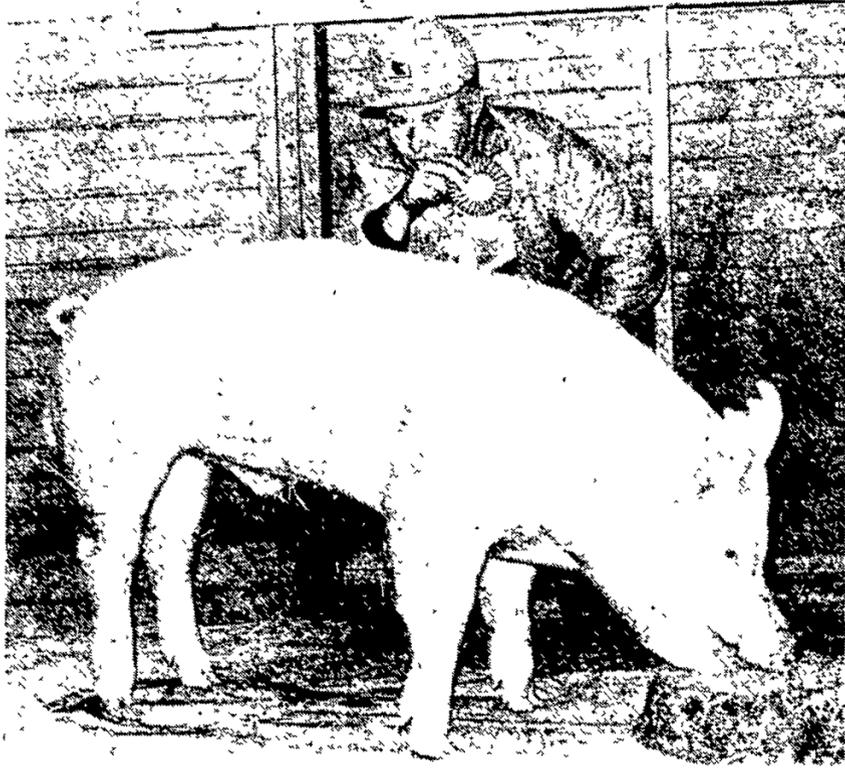
The York County hog producer further believes that good breeding, good feeding, and good management are of uppermost importance. "They all go hand in hand," Strawbridge told Lancaster Farming in an interview recently.

Strawbridge's herd of Yorkshire and Berkshire hogs is officially registered under the names of Strawbridge and McCleary. The partnership has been in existence for years and has built a widely dispersed reputation for producing top quality hogs.

At the recently held Keystone International Livestock Exposition, for example, the York Countains won a fistfull of championship ribbons and a number of reserve champion honors. Not surprisingly, they were named premier breeder and exhibitor for Yorkshire and Hampshire hogs. They won every first place in the Hampshire breed show, and took four out of six blue ribbons in the Yorkshire event. When it was all over, Strawbridge had three grand champions in the show.

The 1976 Keystone Exposition was the 20th annual livestock spectacular to be held in Harrisburg. Strawbridge has been to all of them, and he has always left his mark.

Strawbridge's 120-acre



John Strawbridge has a record of showing champion hogs which dates back to his 4-H days, and he credits

that organization for having given him directions for the purebred hog business.

farm is located in southern York County. He keeps approximately 50 to 60 sows for breeding purposes. Roughly a third of the herd is Yorkshires, the balance are Hamps. All told he has 400 head.

"It takes a lot of hard work and good management to have good hogs year after year," Strawbridge exclaimed. "It's not something you can work at for a while and relax later. It takes daily dedication - daily observation - to make sure everything is alright, that there are no farrowing problems, etc."

The recipient of both the Keystone and American Farmer Degrees (FFA),

Strawbridge started in the purebred hog business in the Fall of 1939. He says 4-H projects got him started in that direction and his father made sure he did things right. "There were no short cuts allowed," the hog breeder emphasized. "If Dad said do something a certain way, and you didn't,

you'd do it over even if he had to get you out of bed late that night!" he remembered.

It's a philosophy that has stuck with Strawbridge. Work is to be done properly or not at all. That's why he emphasizes dedication and daily observation so much. Being with the sows at

farrowing time - be it day or night - is a point he underscored repeatedly. "You've got to really want to do something if you're going to do it right," he said. Getting up at 2 a.m. to assist a sow with her litter isn't for everybody.

Strawbridge has some of his hogs housed inside while others roam around outdoors. Neither program is better than the other, according to Strawbridge's findings. They're fed from self feeders which contain mostly home-grown products.

Aside from their numerous winnings at major Pennsylvania shows, Strawbridge and McCleary have been at the top many times at other expositions. Among their conquests are championship appearances at the Virginia State Fair, the Maryland State Fair, and the North Carolina State Fair.

With all this success and

glory to look back on, Strawbridge can form a pretty accurate opinion on what a hog judge looks for. He says:

"The judge looks for a real productive animal - a carcass which the housewife will want to buy, one that is as free of fat as we can possibly give her."

That's quite different from the hogs which farmers raised less than a generation ago, hog experts point out.



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