

Milking Shorthorns are the key to their success

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SHOEMAKERSVILLE,

Pa. - A recent survey conducted by Lancaster Farming indicated that the number of Berks countians competing at Pennsylvania Farm Show events in recent years has been rapidly dwindling, and "old-timers" at show week contests from this area are becoming a rarity. Distance, time of year, and the quota system for livestock breeds appear to be some of the factors contributing to the decline, but Sam G. Yoder of Shoemakersville is one veteran who is looking forward to his 28th year at the 1977 Farm Show.

The travel distance to Harrisburg is really a minor factor for this Milking Shorthorn exhibitor, since Yoder's showing and judging activities have taken him all over the country, including the states of Illinois, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Missouri, Ohio, Oklahoma, and Wisconsin. According to Yoder, showing is something that "gets in your blood - like a guy who goes to the races." His wife Phyllis agrees with that statement, dryly diagnosing that "with Sam, it's a disease."

Yoder first started showing at Farm Show in 1948 and has missed only one year since then. That was the 1954 show, he explained, the first Farm Show following his draft into military service. Although he was unable to make it home that time, he was able to get leave to coincide with the Farm Show the following year and flew in from Texas where he was stationed at the time, to participate in the show.

Phyllis confirms the fact that her husband has not missed exhibiting at Farm Show since they were married in 1957. As a matter of fact, she recalls with obvious good humor, their first son was born the day Yoder was to leave for the 1958 show, and although Sam E.'s birth postponed her husband's leavetaking by a day, Phyllis got an extended stay in the hospital because the day she was to be released happened to fall on show day for Milking Shorthorns!

In spite of his commitment to exhibiting at the state show, Sam nevertheless maintains that, in his opinion, "it's the wrong time of year to have a show the size and caliber of Farm Show." Housing the livestock is a crucial factor with a January show, and Yoder points out that the only alternative to the quota system used to limit numbers would be expanding barn space to accommodate all the applicants. "And why should Pennsylvania exhibitors be denied the opportunity to exhibit at their own state show?" he adds, "Particularly when Pennsylvania does not have a state fair."

There are a number of farmers in the county who might like to exhibit, Yoder observes, but "people get discouraged" when they are turned down year after year because the quota for their breed has been filled. The Yoders had no difficulty getting their applications for

their Milking Shorthorns accepted again this year, but they note that if they wanted to take their Holsteins, acceptance would not be so certain.

The Yoder's four children have been attending Farm Show with their parents since they were babies, and a series of framed, 8 by 10 newspaper glossies hanging on the wall in the Yoder home illustrate the making of a family Farm Show tradition. In fact, one of the reasons Yoder gives for continuing to attend the show is that "the kids love it."

"The kids" are: Sam, 18; Nedra, 17; Fred, 16; and Wendy, 15. They'll all be attending this year's show with their dad, each showing their own animals. Collectively, the family will be taking 16 Milking Shorthorns, four swine, and one steer.

According to Yoder, the family has had their "share of good luck" at Farm Show over the years, a modest statement considering the Yoders' accumulation of more than 30 banners and at least 10 plaques for champion animals and premier honors. Yoder prefers the banner awards which were given at the show until several years ago when they were replaced by the plaques. He says that the family has often considered having the banners made into a quilt, but notes that "now it looks like we have enough for five quilts."

The friendly rivalry that exists between family members was evident when Nedra and Wendy responded to the question: Will the Yoders be competing with one another in the Farm Show Milking Shorthorn events this year? Both girls answered in the affirmative, and a quick run-down of who won what awards last year suggested that it's most fun beating Dad. Yoder was premier breeder and exhibitor at the '76 show, but Nedra had the champion cow, and Wendy had the reserve senior champion and the reserve junior champion in the open show.

Although Phyllis used to participate in the Farm Show contests when the children were younger, she leaves the showing to her husband and children these days. She'll be in Harrisburg on show day though, "our moral support" as Nedra refers to her mother. According to her husband, Phyllis is "the brains behind the outfit."

Sam E. and Fred, absent during most of Lancaster Farming's interview, returned home in time for a picture-taking session, and as the Yoder clan gathered around their dining room table inspecting old family Farm Show photos, it appeared evident that the "show bug" has infected them all.



The Yoder family reminisces about Farm Shows past as they consider a few of the newspaper photographs taken of the family when the children were small. Seated, left to right, are: Fred, Sam G., Phyllis, and Sam E.; standing behind them are (left to right) Nedra and Wendy.

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