

Some sheep get fleeced for Farm Show

By JOYCE BUPP
York Co. Reporter

MANCHESTER - With a gentle, but firm, maneuver, a ewe is flipped on her back and within moments has been shorn of her heavy Winter coat. As she jumps to her feet and runs to rejoin her worried lambs waiting nearby, the shearer bundles the thick fleece.

One man who annually repeats that procedure about 1200 times is Richard M. Coons, York R5. In addition to serving as a Dover Area School vocational agriculture teacher, Coons has built a reputation for excellence as a sheep shearer.

For the first time, Coons entered fleeces into Farm Show competition this year. A regular exhibitor at the York Fair, he captured five first places, as well as the grand reserve championships there this year.

Fleeces entered at Farm Show by Coons were among the approximately 60 bundles exhibited yearly. Each breed has certain fleece characteristics, ranging from the extreme curliness of Merinos to some types with almost goat-like straightness. Because of decades of crossbreeding of

sheep, categories are classified by bloodline percentages, largely determined by breed "wooliness." Coons' Dorset fleeces, for example were entered in the half-blood percentage division. Categories are also broken down into both ram and ewe divisions.

Although his flock of 20 ewes keep him occupied year round, the busiest time begins in late February when custom shearing gets underway. Every weekend from then through May is devoted to visits to about 100 regular customers in southcentral Pennsylvania and northern Maryland.

Rams generally yield the very nicest fleeces, because their systems do not have the protein drain experienced by ewes carrying and nurturing lambs. Since wool is protein, the quality of the fleece is determined by the amount of that nutrient available in the animal's body. Well-fed sheep yield fleeces normally weighing between six and 10 pounds each.

"Alfalfa is the best feed for sheep," insists Coons. "It makes the fleece twice as long and heavy as when timothy or similar grass hays are fed. Alfalfa-fed



Everyone loves a lamb, including Richard Coons and his daughter, Wendy, age six.

sheep also have would that's oily with lanolin, while other feeds just grease and 'gum up' the hairs. Oats are also good, and alfalfa or soybean meal."

Fleeces are marketed through both the Pennsylvania and Maryland Wool Pools. The Coons also sell some choice bundles to The Mannings at East Berlin, an arts and crafts center where classes are taught in spinning and weaving with natural wool. The Mannings sponsors an annual June crafts exhibit, where Coons demonstrates his sheep shearing talents.

Craftsmen demand the longest and cleanest fleeces, and pay top price for them. A high-quality white fleece often sells to hobbyists for \$1.50 per pound, compared to the Wool Pool pound price of 60 to 70 cents. Especially valuable to home spinners and weavers are the scarce black and grey fleeces, which may bring \$2 per pound.

Both avid promoters of (Turn to Page 107)



Richard Coons and his wife Linda will be taking wool fleeces to the Farm Show this year.

CHEEP COAL IS FOR THE BIRDS

Nothing's worse than trying to get heat out of cheap coal. We sell and stand behind Red Trademarked FAMOUS READING ANTHRACITE

There's one sure guide to quality in coal. Just look for the Red Spots. They are the trademark of Famous Reading Anthracite—one of the finest Pennsylvania hard coals. Phone us for prompt service.

WALKER COMPANY
GAP, PA. 442-4169

Your Sprayer Headquarters

Sprayers & Fittings

JOHNSON LIQUID FERTILIZER APPLICATORS

SPECIAL DISCOUNTS ON PARTS TO ALL CUSTOM OPERATORS REGISTERED WITH US.

Lancaster County's Only Dealer Specializing in Sprayer Sales & Service

LESTER A. SINGER

RONKS, PA.
PHONE: (717) 687-6712 — EVENINGS & SATS. (717) 687-7116

Household Molasses	Livestock Molasses
<p>Baking Molasses Table Syrup Blackstrap Molasses</p>	<p>Cows Horses Sheep - Goats Hogs - Chickens</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Liquid feeding cane molasses • Honey Brook Brand dried molasses • Z Brand dried molasses
<p>LOOK FOR HONEY BROOK MOLASSES AT YOUR LOCAL GROCER OR FEED MILL.</p> <p>IF NOT AVAILABLE, CALL (215) 273-3776</p>	
<p>ZOOK MOLASSES CO. Box 160, Honey Brook, PA</p>	