

Baby goats make good Easter pets -- no kidding



Bottle feeding two of their goat kids are Roberta, 11, (left) and Brenda Demler, 12. Each year the Demlers sell eight to 10 of their goat kids for Easter pets.

By JOANNE SPAHR
NEWMANSTOWN — "My wife gets upset when people call and want a kid goat for slaughter," states Lewis Demler, Newmanstown R1. Demler, a computer systems analyst, has been raising goats for four years and selling kid goats at Easter for three of those four. But, unlike most animals involved in the Easter trade, Demler's goats don't go for slaughter.

"I don't bottle feed those babies just to have

somebody slaughter them," says quiet and demure Mrs. Demler with a defined firmness in her voice.

All told, the Demlers have five does and one billy they use to kid for Easter, and their two children Roberta and Brenda each have a purebred animal they show in 4-H. The Demlers' Easter animals are crossbreds, and from the five does they get an average of eight to 10 kids for sale as pets each Easter.

"They make good Easter pets," Demler states.

"They're good for children, and people need gifts now that chicks can't be sold and rabbits have to be eight weeks of age." Since the rabbits are ready for slaughter at 10 weeks old, there isn't much time for a child to enjoy that type of animal.

"Goats are also loveable," states Demler. "Although you have to have a set-up for a larger animal, a goat is a handleable pet."

The Demlers say rural families purchase many of their goats, and tell of one

customer who owned a 30-cow dairy and wanted a goat for his child to play with and milk, as well.

Goats are also favored as pets because the owner gets a fringe benefit — they're good for weed control. Goats are not as good as sheep when it comes to cleaning up brush and scrub, but Demler says they don't have the odor that sheep do, either.

The Demlers will "let go" of their animals at six weeks, but they prefer to keep them to eight weeks of age. By that time the animals are weaned.

To bring their animals to the attention of interested individuals, they run one advertisement a year and find that they have to turn people down every year. According to Demler, most people prefer billies because they incorrectly assume that a doe will have to be milked when she gets older.

The prices the Demlers ask are \$30 for kids up to six weeks and \$35 to \$40 over six weeks. These prices are higher than some at livestock markets, but the

Demlers can furnish the buyer with a health certificate stating that the herd is TB and brucellosis free.

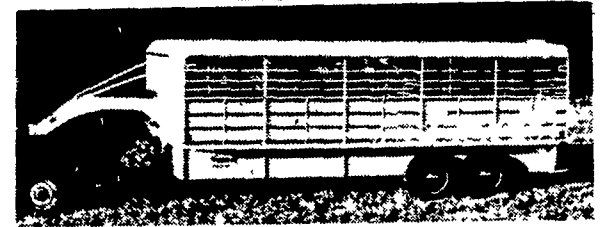
"A lot of people don't realize they can go to markets. And, if they do realize they can, they're

leery of what they'll find there," he says.

Just as with other individuals who sell the kids for slaughter, the Demlers find Easter the best time of the year to market their animals.

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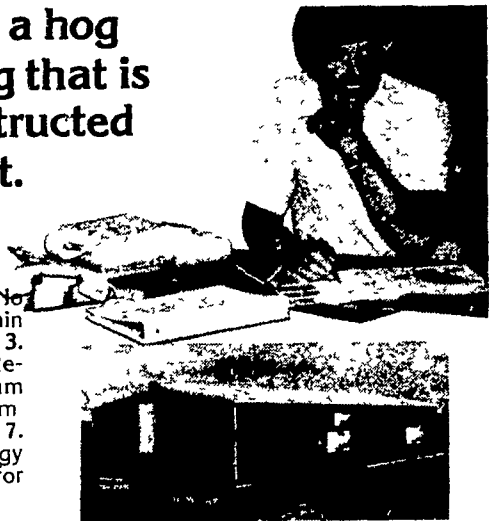
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