

4-H steers branded for Farm Show competition

By JOANNE SPAHR
LANCASTER - Every year during Farm Show when the ring of junior beef projects encircles the large arena on Thursday morning, one question is inevitably asked by more than one bystander - "What are the marks on the hips of those steers?"

Those marks "FS", are the freeze brand which is required for any junior steer to participate in the state Farm Show event, and in the case of 4-H clubs, the brand is also necessary for members to participate in district beef shows held in November.

For several 4-H clubs in Lancaster Farming's coverage area, last weekend was the time to get down to freeze branding, since June 1 is this year's official deadline.

Lancaster, Lebanon, and Chester Counties each met separately at designated locations on Saturday to do their branding with Chester County's club putting through 28 steers, Lebanon's club, 19, and Lancaster, 86. Berks County's 4-H'ers, who did their branding two months ago, put their marks on 44 steers. Cumberland County, with 36 members,

did their branding in February. April 1st was the set time for York Countians with 85 steers ending up with the FS marking.

Dauphin County's two 4-H beef clubs also branded in the past weeks, with the Lower Dauphin Beef Club having 18 members and the Upper Dauphin 4-H beef and Pig Club reporting 16 beef projects.

The Lancaster County group, the Red Rose Beef and Sheep Club, met at the Charles Myers Black and White Holstein Barn, Lancaster. Prior to the branding date, each member was asked to clip an eight inch block of hair from his or her steer's left hip about three to four inches back from and slightly above the hook bone or just back of the point of the left shoulder. This area was then treated with alcohol and the freeze brand applied.



Jason Weaver, Quarryville R2, a leader in the Red Rose 4-H Beef and Sheep Club, freeze brands a steer for district and Farm Show competition.

For black steers, the time involved was 60 seconds, for colored breeds, 70 to 90 and for white steers, 90 seconds. A combination of methyl alcohol and dry ice was used.

At the same time the branding was taking place, the animals were ear tagged with metal tags from the Bureau of Animal Industry of the State Department of Agriculture.

After the branding and tagging, the animals' starting weights were recorded. Lancaster's steers will be checked for their finishing weight in November. During the branding, Ralgro implants were available as were stomach worming pills.

Although every 4-H project is branded to go to Farm

Show, each county is allowed to take only a certain amount of animals to participate in that show. The steers to fill this quota will be chosen in November at round-up, and the remainder will compete at the district show.

According to county agents, freeze branding has only been a requirement for approximately the past five years. The advantages to this type of branding over hot branding are that it is much simpler, less painful, and easier to do.

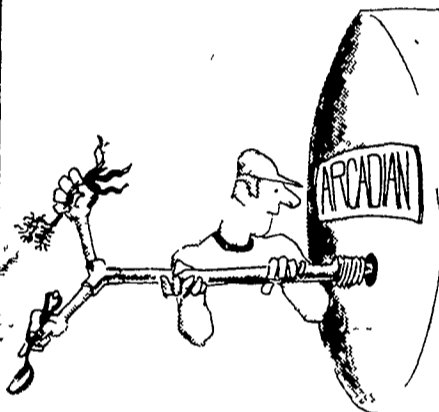
Avoid root crops in problem soils

UNIVERSITY PARK - If your garden soil is the heavy clay type that hardens when it dries out or if your planting area is full of stones, you'd do better to grow tomatoes, beans or cucumbers than root vegetables such as carrots, parsnips or beets, say Penn State specialists. Although root vegetables are flavorful and packed with vitamins and minerals they often form forked roots and are badly malformed when grown in problem soils. Compact soils can be overcome by adding organic matter for a period of years. However, raw organic matter such as leafmold, straw or wood shavings should be allowed to decay first before the material is added to the soil, says McKeen.

Here's another thing to keep in mind. While most vegetable crops thrive in soil containing animal manures, this is not true for root crops. When carrots and other root crops are grown in soil with fresh manure or other organic material they form a mass of feeder roots which gives an unsightly appearance of whiskers.

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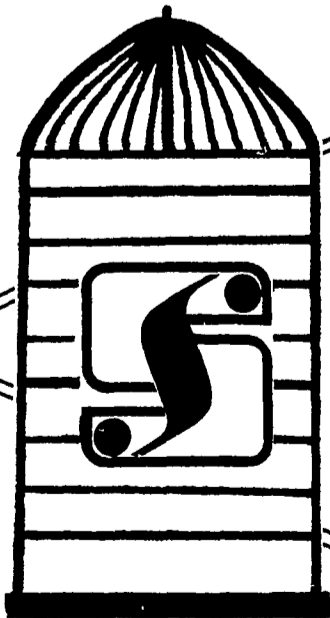


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