

# First pet teaches many lessons

By LYNN HERSHEY  
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NEWARK, Del. — My towheaded 11-year-old niece Claudia is a child of nature. She adores any creature that walks, hops, or crawls on two or more legs — or no legs at all, as in the case of earthworms. After a rain she carefully picks up all the earthworms that have wandered onto the concrete driveway and places them tenderly in the grass so they won't get run over.



Lynn Hershey

Once when she was five Claudia held her closed fist outstretched to me with a sweet smile. "Here, Auntie," she said. I received her gift in my hand — a collection of moist grubs, beetles, and balled-up pill bugs she'd been carrying around in her pocket. I tried to act pleased but didn't carry it off too well.

Claudia loves Summer when all the creatures are out. Even on the hottest days she wears her T-shirt tucked inside her shorts so she can carry frogs around her middle, safe underneath the shirt. Sometimes her midsection is so jiggy with activated frogs that she goes into a fit of giggles while faint-hearted grownups grow pale.

Her room looks like a zoo. There's a tank of tropical fish in one corner. A hermit crab hangs out in another. In the middle of the floor are cages for her gerbils and hamsters, presently numbering six. An unflappable cat, who is somehow compatible with this assortment, frequently naps on the bed.

Recently when my husband and I spent several days at Claudia's house, Hormel the hamster sneaked out of his cage and disappeared. "He'll come out when he gets hungry," said an unperturbed Claudia.

Hormel got hungry about 2 a.m. under our bed where he had been hiding. He began

chewing noisily on our slippers and the lamp cord, finally allowing us to grab him and return him to his cage.

Parents who can take this sort of circus in stride will find that children benefit in many ways from having a pet.

Dr. Patricia Nelson, Delaware Extension specialist in family and child development, says a pet can expand a child's horizons and initiate a concern for other creatures and for the natural environment. By watching pets and caring for them, children learn about their needs for food, water, sleep, exercise, cleanliness, shelter, gentle handling. There may even be opportunities to witness the miracle of birth.

When a pet dies and parents help a youngster bury it with love and dignity, a child learns in a natural way to accept death as a part of life.

A pet may be one of the first real responsibilities a child will have, so be sure your son or daughter is ready, says Dr. Nelson. A youngster should be old enough to understand that an animal is not a toy but a living creature to be

cherished and faithfully cared for.

Christmas may not be the best time for a pet to join the family. Extension veterinarians say puppies and kittens are especially vulnerable to personality damage during their adjustment to new surround-

ings. Because of all the extra confusion and activity during the holidays, a new pet could either be neglected or handled too much, and tragedy could result.

When the time is right, though, choose a healthy animal from sanitary surroundings. Be sure your

youngster knows how to care for it properly. If appropriate, take it to a veterinarian for an examination, immunizations, and advice on care and feeding.

Speaking of veterinarians, guess what Claudia wants to be when she grows up?

## Letter to Santa

(Continued from Page 111)

Paul's list goes on and on. Among other things, he wants all the musical instruments in the world, sunglasses, colored feathers, great big bricks to go with the great big blocks, a toy Indian chief, his own Christmas tree, lots of wind-up cars that make a noise like Daddy's car, a starfish, an aquarium and a horse

Karl wasn't quite as lengthy with his list. He got right down to business and told Saint Nick that all he wanted was a racetrack with lots of cars on it, that's all.

Nonetheless, poor old Santa will have to make a couple trips to fill the orders.

Have a merry Christmas, everyone!

## Hay, corn contest held

LEBANON, — A hay contest was held by the Cedar Crest Young Farmers at the Cedar Crest High School on December 5. Taking the honors in the alfalfa class was I. Hershey Bare, Lebanon R2, whose sample of fourth cutting was selected as the grand champion in quality. This field of DeKalb 127 alfalfa also placed first in the Pennsylvania Alfalfa Yield Contest held this year and was recognized at the recent Forage and Corn Conference held at Penn State. The four cutting yielded a total of 8.71 tons per acre.

In the first cutting alfalfa class, Scott Balsbaugh's Lebanon R1, sample slice placed first, and Ferndale Farms, Lebanon R1, placed second. In the second to fourth cutting class, I. Hershey Bare's sample placed first and Arnold

Acres, Lebanon R2, placed second.

Dick Kreider, Lebanon R2, with a field of Pioneer 3184 placed first in the corn yield contest with a yield of 162.4 bushels per acre. Ferndale Farms placed second with a yield of 161.1 bushels per acre with Funk-G4636. Third place yield went to Galen Boyd with Schlessmans 700 yielding 160.8 bushels per acre.

Also during the evening was the election of the 1979 officers. Officers elected were: Carl Reist, president; Leon Arnold, vice-president; Mike Arnold, secretary;

Clifford Groff, treasurer; and Albert Moyer, public relations director. The young farmer advisor is Dick Moore.

The next meeting is planned for December 19 in the high school vocational agriculture department beginning at 7:30 p.m. The program will be "The Compaction of Agricultural Soils," describing the causes of soil compaction and what can be done to alleviate the problem.

Local farmers and agribusinessmen are welcome to attend the young farmer meetings.



Jaguars are afraid of dogs, even little ones.

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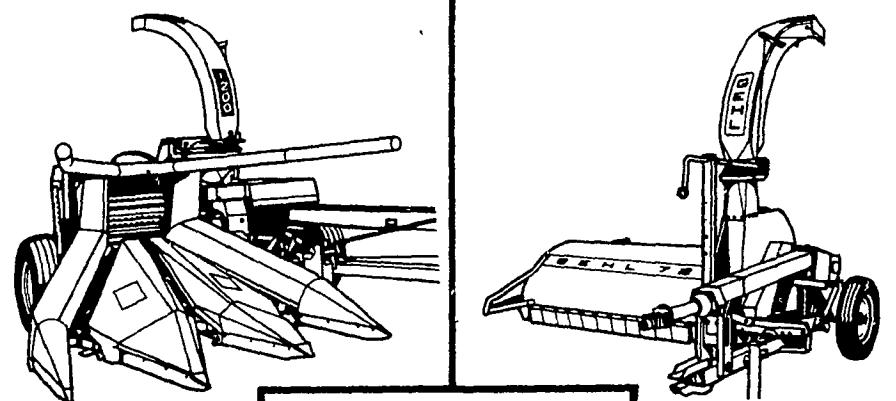
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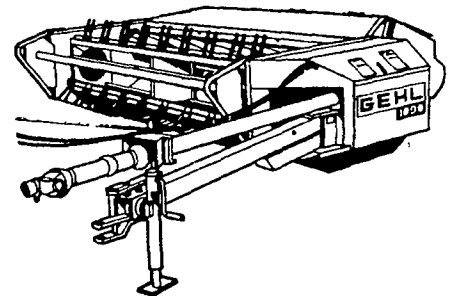
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