

Michelle Bankert is outstanding 4-H'er, swine producer

BY JOYCE BUPP
Staff Correspondent

HANOVER — Operating a swine farm of her own is the goal of this year's York Fair outstanding 4-H exhibitor, Michelle Bankert.

Michelle, 18, is the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Roger Bankert, R3 Hanover. A 4-H member for seven years, Michelle is a veteran hog showman in both youth and open classes.

She's also exhibited beef and sheep during her 4-H career, as well as carry a variety of other projects, including cooking, sewing, vegetables, forestry and crafts.

Although the Bankert family has been breeding and marketing purebred Durocs and Chester Whites for several years, the family only moved onto the farm a half-decade ago. As a small girl, Michelle frequently accompanied her dad to the barns to help tend the herd, absorbing invaluable information about the pork production business.

"Most of my hog knowledge came from my dad," credits Michelle. "He got me interested in judging, too."

A member of the county's 4-H livestock judging team, Michelle earned enough points earlier this summer in state competition to place fourth high individual in the Penn State contest. In 1979, she was part of the county team

finishing in the state 4-H runner-up position.

A high point in her 4-H judging efforts, though, came in 1980 when the county's meats judging team took state honors, and she traveled with her three teammates to the Royal Livestock Exhibition in Kansas City for national competition.

Ironically, Michelle laments that she does her judging on hog classes, gaining considerably more points in the sheep scoring categories. Within the relatively few years she's been studying the art of livestock evaluation, ideal hog type traits have done a turnaround. While judges once looked for a large, thick-topped animal with lots of body, today's hog is more preferred long, narrow individual, with less body depth.

About 200 head of purebred breeder and market animals fill the assortment of pens in the Bankert barns, with Michelle employed full-time on the operation. Among her responsibilities are helping with the feeding, and with moving groups of hogs within the series of pens.

"My dad moves more pigs around than anyone else I know," she quips with a grin.

A June graduate of Spring Grove Area High School, Michelle is also employed part-time in the offices of the Thomasville Livestock Auction. After a year of assisting

with the hog operation, she plans to enroll at Harrisburg Area Community College for computer programming studies.

With just one year of 4-H remaining, Michelle plans to continue focusing her main efforts toward hog production, while stepping into greater leadership with the younger members of the 4-H clubs. She's president of the Jefferson Community Club, active in the county swine club and former officer of county council.

A year ago, the attractive, hog enthusiast won the crown as the county 4-H queen. Along with 4-H king Bill Wise, she's made numerous appearances promoting the 4-H program within the organization and to the general public.

As the fair's outstanding 4-H'er, Michelle may select an expense-paid trip within the country to some event related to her project activities. She's chosen to attend the Duroc Classic, part of the International Livestock Exposition scheduled for Louisville, Kentucky, in mid-November.

Now, for many young women, a trip to a hog show would be no major thrill.

But for Michelle Bankert, youthful in age but mature in her knowledge of the pork industry, the Louisville Expo is just one more



Michelle Bankert, selected as the York Fair's outstanding 4-H'er, puts the finishing touches to a 4-H promotional exhibit at the Bankert family's swine pens. Hogs are Michelle's favorite animals.

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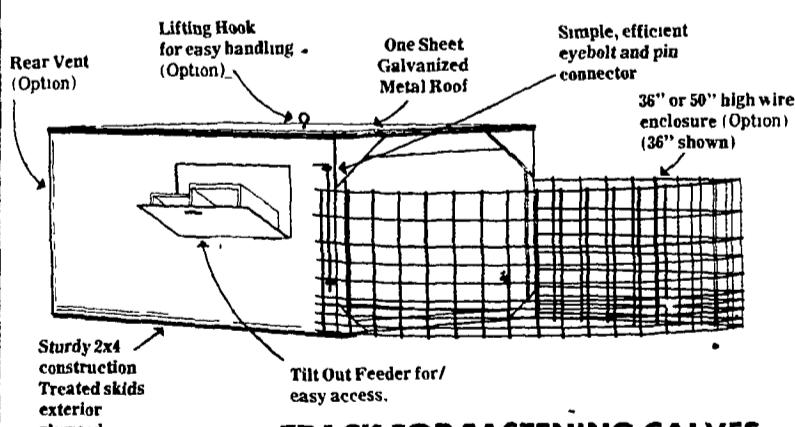
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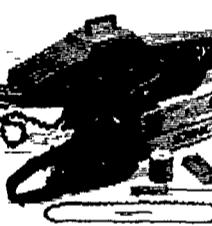
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