



Says Anne of her daughter, Barbie, "She just loves these sheep, especially the lambs." Here she lambsits a little Dorset as a favor at the "Big E" in Massachusetts.

## 4-H project becomes family affair

BY DEBBIE KOONTZ

LANCASTER — When first you enter the little dirt lane leading to the farm of the Robert Rohrer family in Quarryville, you get a sense of beauty and simplicity — a warm, comfortable home flanked by your regular aged barn and a few lazy sheep grazing in the pasture.

It's only after you enter the home that you realize what an active and accomplished family you're dealing with.

One step inside the door will offer you a room-full of trophies, ribbons, plaques and banners — all deservedly displayed by the two Rohrer children, Gerald, 15, and Barbie, 10, who won them.

Gerald, in his fifth year of showing Southdown sheep, and Barbie, in her second year, have established quite a name and reputation for themselves not only at local round-ups, but at impressive shows such as the Eastern States Exposition in Massachusetts.

Gerald's and Barbie's lengthy list of awards this year alone, includes premier exhibitor, champion ewe, and seven first places from the Maryland State Fair in August; all four top awards in the Southdown breed (champion and reserve champion ram and ewe) and premier exhibitor at the Eastern National Livestock Show in Timonium, Md; and premier exhibitor, champion ram, champion and reserve champion ewe, and 8 first places out of ten classes they entered at the Eastern States Exposition.

In addition to these honors, Gerald and Barbie received champion ram and champion and reserve champion ewes in the

adult competition at the 1981 Farm Show. They won first place in every class they entered in the show.

But getting the Rohrer children to talk about their accomplishments is as hard as counting the number of awards they have received in their years of 4-H. Instead, it is their mother and father, Anne and Robert, who boast, justifiably, about their children.

Anne attributes part of their successful record to the meticulous and patient manner in which Gerald and Barbie work with their sheep. "Gerald, especially, is really a perfectionist in his trimming. He'll take as much as up to six hours to shear a sheep sometimes. He just keeps at it until he's satisfied. Many times when we're at shows, I'll have to tell him to relax and get some sleep. Otherwise, he'd just keep working," Anne relates.

She says she feels this perfectionism and dedication is often the key to their success. "Many national, professional judges comment on his ability to trim so well for his age. They really notice how much time Gerald puts on his sheep."

And what about Barbie's attitude? "She just loves these sheep," says Mom. "She's really good with the sheep, especially the lambs."

Another positive factor behind the Rohrer success streak is that they have developed their own good show string through close, controlled breeding — selecting the outstanding traits of homebred ewes and rams.

They now have ten head on their show string, plus six others: a stud



Gerald and Barbie stand beside their champion Southdown ewe of the Southdown Regional Show at the Eastern States Exposition in Massachusetts. They took first

place in eight of the 10 classes they entered, plus premier exhibitor, champion ram and reserve champion ewe.



Here the Rohrer children stand beside just a few of the trophies, banners, and ribbons awards. and to the right hang many, many more they've won in their years of 4-H. To their left



The Rohrers make sheep a family project, a must they say if a child is to learn and benefit from an experience. Here, the Rohrers sit in their Quarryville home, and in the background? What else? More trophies.

ram and 5 bred ewes.

Out of the nine sheep they show, seven have been champions or reserve champions at various state and national shows.

Robert Rohrer is quick to emphasize that Gerald and Barbie do all the work when it comes to showing and caring for their sheep.

"They take care of them, themselves. I made sure they knew what they were getting into when we bought them," he said.

However he did stress that a project will work only if it has the cooperation of the whole family.

"A lot of people buy their kids a lamb as a project and never want to get involved. That doesn't work."

Anne adds, "You can't just buy your child a lamb and expect them to know everything to do."

She says they attended 4-H meetings with Gerald and Barbie and at least one parent always accompanies the young twosome at showing time. "This helps in their showing — knowing that their

parents are backing them."

Parental support and teaching is as important in 4-H projects as it is in other day-to-day situations which children encounter, according to the Rohrers.

"We've taught them to be very efficient in the showing. Also to watch when the sheep eat and see that they eat very well. When sheep get sick, they don't give you much warning. The work these children do would be tiring for some adults," Anne said.

"As far as I'm concerned, if you're going to compete, you may as well go all out," Robert says. "The family has to work together."

Anne couldn't be more pleased in their family involvement in the world of sheep.

"They're so pretty. That's one reason we picked the Southdown breed, because we liked how they looked. They provide such a beautiful relationship between our love of tending sheep and that of

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