

Readies Powerhouse for steer show

Frey weathers weight controversy

BY SALLY BAIR
Staff Correspondent

LANCASTER — Last year's Farm Show publicity included several stories about 4-H steers which were turned away from the show because they were over the maximum weight limit of 1350 pounds.

While the stories got widespread attention, York County Agent Tony Dobrosky asserts that the fact that some 4-H'ers couldn't compete was nothing new: over the years others have been turned away for the same reason. He adds that there have been a few steers turned away for being under the minimum as well.

Nevertheless, it brings to the forefront one of the problems with preparing 4-H steers for showing in January—that of keeping them from reaching market weight too early in the season.

The problem is aggravated for some because most county round-ups are held in October and November, so in many cases it means selecting a steer and deciding specifically which show to feed for. Furthermore, Dobrosky says his local round-up sale averages 10-13 cents per pound higher than Farm Show, a fact supported by Lancaster County Agent Glenn Shirk.

Lancaster County 4-H'er Ernie Frey has the distinction of having had champion and reserve champion steers for the past two years at Farm Show, but he expresses no worries about having an overweight steer. He states, "I think 4-H'ers may try to start with a smaller steer. We feed basically the same all year, trying to coast to

Round-up in November and then push to put on marbling by Farm Show."

This eight-year veteran of 4-H continues, "We're keeping my steer about where we want him and I think we can keep him there until Farm Show."

Last year Ernie's steer graded out as choice, about which Ernie says, "I was sure he would." But he admits that his grand champion of the previous year was not quite as good in grading because he wasn't as heavy.

The problem of how the carcass grades is another issue of concern, especially to buyers who don't like it when blue ribbon and champion animals yield less than choice carcasses.

Ernie says, "Some steers have a big frame and the only way to get it choice is to really feed it. If you start out with a smaller frame, it will make it okay by Farm Show."

About his steer, Powerhouse, Ernie says, "I think he has a good chance this year. I like him but he is a little stubborn. A Solcano High School senior, and vice president of his FFA chapter, Ernie now works on leading his steer at least one mile three times a week."

Lancaster County 4-H leader Jason Weaver, Quarryville, says he definitely feels everyone is conscious of weight this year because of all the publicity last year. "The 4-H'ers are watching their feeding programs very carefully," he states.

Shirk agrees, "I think they are aware of the weight limitation as their cattle approach market weight well before Farm Show time. They find they must change

their feeding pattern and put their steers on a holding pattern." Of course, he notes, "They have to be cognizant that with a change of feeding there is a change in the quality of beef."

Shirk feels that these points go into consideration when the 4-H'ers make their initial selections. He feels the youth must almost pick the show they want to aim for. "They can purchase a steer to finish in prime shape for Farm Show."

Dobrosky points out that York County is taking only eight of the 16 steers they are allowed at Farm Show. He attributes this to the fact that prices are 10 cents-13 cents a pound higher at their local Round-up in October and says that many 4-H'ers feel they need their money earlier to buy a new steer "in these economic times."

Some view the feeding through October, November, and December as an unnecessary expense, and a hindrance in purchasing a new steer. Dobrosky says some are apprehensive about the weather and still others have problems getting out of school.

About their steers he says, "I don't think we selected our steers any different from in the past, and hopefully we didn't have steers that wanted to go to Farm Show that weighed 1350 in October."

"We selected the ones for Farm Show in the 1050-1150 bracket so the 4-H'ers can keep feeding them right up to the time of the show." He said they also take into account the reduced weight of gain which

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Getting a Farm Show steer ready for the big day in the large arena takes months of special feeding and grooming. Here Ernie works on Powerhouses's coat to "break" the hair for the "hairup" look.

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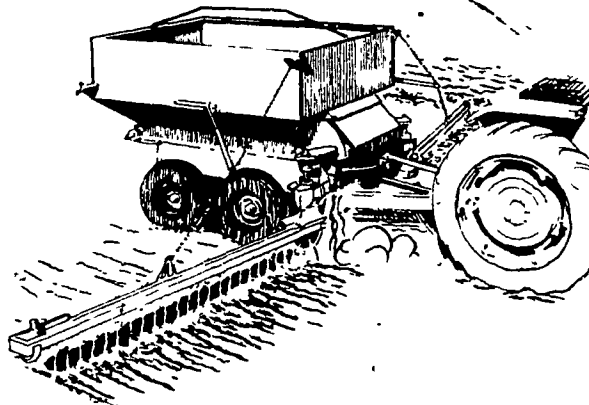
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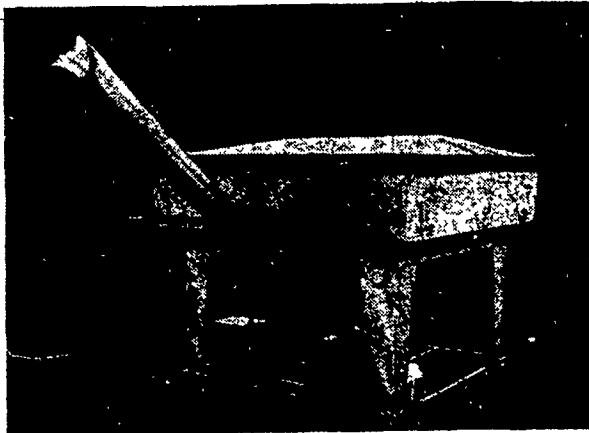
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