4-H'ers Participate in Exchange

NEWARK, Del. — Eleven 4-H members and three adults from Davidson County, N. C., spent a recent action-paced week visiting their counterparts in New Castle County, Del.

For 14-year-old Gary Snyder, the memorable experiences of the week included a visit to Baltimore's Inner Harbor with its submarine, Science Center and National Aquarium; seining (fishing with a large net) from the University of Delaware's Marine Studies boat off the coast of Lewes; and chasing his hat down the boardwalk in Rehoboth Beach. Another highlight was picking up the governor's telephone during a tour of the state capital.

Advisors Valerie and Luther Owen, who came with their son Tracy, had praise for the Delaware 4-H host families. They also pronounced the local scenery beautiful, and not too different from their home county in the Piedmont. Neither could they detect any big difference between the New Castle County accent and their own Southern drawl.

"When we visited New York last year," one teen explained, "everybody ribbed us about our accents - but not here in Delaware!"

The experience was an enjoyable one for all concerned.

"We tried to give our guests a good educational experience," said University of Delaware Extension 4-H Agent Jim Moore. "We introduced them to our government in Dover, the Dover Air Force Base, our marine environment and our local agriculture. We also picked up plenty of ideas from each other about 4-H."

Camera, computer rate beef

WASHINGTON, D.C. — A video camera and computer are telling meat researchers how much lean and fat meat are in beef carcasses.

At the experimental stage now, the video-computer analysis may become a new electronic technique for meat grading by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, said Terry B. Kinney, Jr., administrator of USDA's Agricultural Research Service.

Kinney said the system, called a visual image analyzer, could help the meat industry assure consumers they will get the leanness in beef they desire.

That's because the automated technique may offer a new degree of accuracy and consistency in predicting the lean and fat content in beef, reported H. Russell Cross, food technologist at the research agency's Roman L. Hruska Meat Animal Research Center in Clay Center, Neb.

In laboratory tests, the technique was estimated to be 93.6 percent accurate in its measurements of the lean and fat content of the ninth, tenth and eleventh ribs of the carcass, which is an indicator of its leanness.

USDA meat graders, in the current system, measure visible areas of lean and fat of the twelfth and thirteenth ribs and then apply an equation to predict the total content. This conventional way of determining the same measurement was 84 percent accurate.

Similar studies on a larger scale in meat packing houses are needed, Cross said, to confirm the analyzer's accuracy and speed.

Cross said the analyzer resulted from several years of research on automating meat grading. Collaborating in the work were Clay Center animal scientists and Kansas State University engineers who developed the analyzer under a contract with the research agency.