

## Pa. Dairy Goat Association celebrates 40th year

**BY LAURA ENGLAND**  
**BELLEFONTE** — When members of the Pa. Dairy Goat Association get together next month for their Big Weekend event, they will do more than show goats and compete in milking and cheese-making competitions - they will be celebrating 40 years as an organization.

Begun by six persons in 1944, the Pa. Dairy Goat Association now boasts 110 members and 15 local state chapters. These members raise approximately 15,000 goats in Pennsylvania.

According to secretary Jane Smeltzer, Bellefonte, the Dairy Goat Association had its strongest years during the late 1950's and early 1960's. Then, the association flourished with about 200 members

due largely to the fact that more homesteading was done, Mrs. Smeltzer said.

Membership today; however, is on the upswing.

Association president Danny Harter, Bellefonte, said that membership is showing a steady growth and goat numbers are increasing. "We've gone from shows of 50 to 60 (goats) to shows of 500 animals," Harter said.

Harter, who's been raising the Toggenburg breed since 1976, said he credits state Agriculture Secretary Penrose Hallowell for the increased recognition of dairy goats. "Secretary Hallowell has really recognized dairy goats and has helped to coordinate programs," Harter said.

With an increasing popularity in

Pennsylvania, dairy goats are now seen as useful animals, Harter said. "People don't make fun of them as much anymore," he added.

Harter explained that in foreign countries, goats have always been viewed as useful animals and are the livelihood of many. More goats milk is consumed in foreign countries than any other kind of milk, Harter said.

In Pennsylvania, goat's milk is normally marketed as licensed raw milk, Mrs. Smeltzer said, and is used for fluid consumption and cheese-making. Nine dairies in Pennsylvania are licensed to sell raw goat's milk.

The dairy goat breeds recognized in Pennsylvania are the Alpine, Lamancha, Nubian, Oberhasli, Saanen and Toggenburg. The Smeltzers, whose dairy goats belong to daughter Debra-Lee, raise Alpines and Lamanchas.

Raising her goats as FFA projects, Deb Smeltzer is quite involved in the dairy goat industry and is a member of the state association serving as its youth representative. Selected last year, Miss Smeltzer has had an important role in promoting the dairy goat industry.

The youth representative program, begun three years ago, is "one good way to promote dairy goats," Harter said. "We are really pushing that program."

As youth representative, Miss Smeltzer has attended various state shows, participated in mall promotions, helped to kick off Farm City Week programs, spoken to groups and has attended both the state and national goat association meetings. Her biggest



Youth representative Deb Smeltzer, Bellefonte, is particularly fond of her Lamancha goats.



Pa. Dairy Goat Association president Danny Harter, Bellefonte, sees dairy goats as "useful animals" with a growing popularity.

upcoming event is the Big Weekend, set for June 15 to 17.

The Big Weekend, held at the Huntington County Fairgrounds, is the association's event of the year, and this year it will be extra special because of the 40th year celebration.

The Pa. Dairy Goat Association will celebrate its 40 years through

displays, dairy shows, cheese-making contests and the selection of the 1984 youth representative.

It should be a fun-filled weekend, Mrs. Smeltzer said, and she encourages all with an interest in goats to attend and help the association celebrate 40 successful years.

## Centre County FFA'er takes pride in dairy goats

**BY LAURA ENGLAND**  
**WARRIORS MARK** — Centre County FFA member Jonathan

Merkle is mighty proud of his top milk producer. The 6-year-old "milking machine" recorded 3,800

pounds of milk with 3.2 percent butterfat on official Dairy Herd Improvement Association (DHIA) test in 1983. A remarkable feat, according to Jon.

A yearly production record of 3,800 pounds, remarkable? Well, yes, considering the fact that this top milk producer is an Alpine dairy goat.

Jon, the 16-year-old son of Charles and Dolores Merkle of R1 Warriors Mark, has been raising dairy goats on the family's Centre County farm for five years. However, the herd's foundation was begun in the sunny land of California.

The Merkles left California when Charles Merkle accepted a teaching position at Penn State University. They left behind sunny skies and warm days, but they wouldn't leave behind their dairy goats. In fact, the herd's foundation dam happens to be Jon's top milk producer and the mother of all his Alpine goats.

A junior at State College Area High School, Jon raises his goats as FFA projects, along with market lambs, veal calves, breeding sheep and a dairy heifer. His goat herd of Alpines and Saanens totals 17 head - three bucks, six milking does and seven kids.

Very involved in dairy goats with goals to increase milk production, Jon entered his Sinking Springs herd in the DHIA program. Although, he had always recorded his goats' production, he said the DHIA program is more accurate and adds credibility to his production records.

On the program for one year, Sinking Springs' rolling herd average for 1983 was 3,100 pounds of milk. His top producer is Mari Monte Mary who once milked 31.9 pounds in one day.

The average daily milk production for dairy goats is eight pounds, Jon explained. The



Jonathan Merkle, Centre County FFA'er, milks his six does by hand, three times a day.

Sinking Springs herd averages nine to 16 pounds daily.

Jon, with the help of his mother, milks his goats three times daily - at 5 a.m., 1 p.m. and 9 p.m. It takes two to three minutes to milk each doe by hand, Jon said.

To make the milking chore easier, Jon built two milking stalls and set them up side-by-side. The does are fed grain during milking, about one pound to every two pounds of milk.

Jon said he would eventually like to set up a more permanent

milking situation, but for now his current set up is adequate as long as he keeps his herd size down.

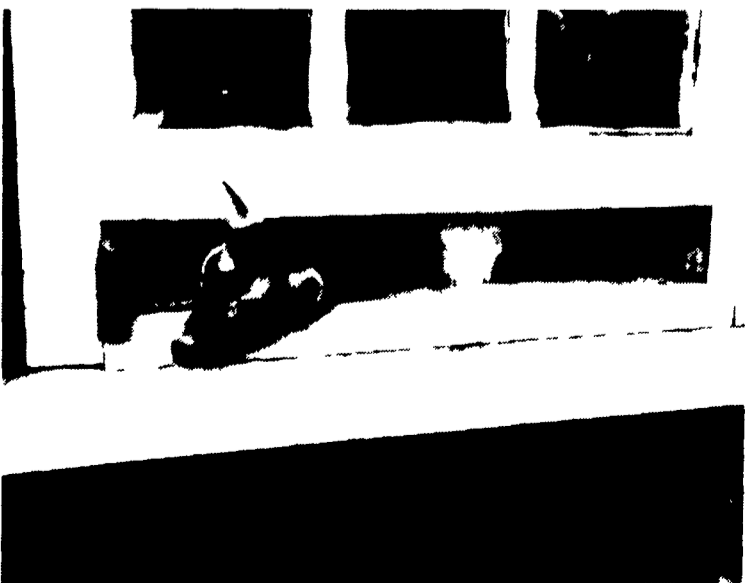
The Merkles prefer to keep four of the top milkers in production. They cut back the herd size each year to include the top four does and the best kids.

"We can't use all the milk when the does are in full production," Mrs. Merkle said explaining that the original goats were bought to provide milk for the table.

"We use all the milk ourselves,"



Mari Monte Mary, an Alpine doe, is Jonathan Merkle's highest producer, recording 3,800 pounds of milk with 3.2 percent butterfat on DHIA in 1983.



Curiosity runs high among all "kids," as this little fellow, peeking through the window, seems to prove.