

Folkers aim to 'bring home the bacon' at Farm Show

BY SALLY BAIR
Staff Correspondent

NEW HOLLAND — Laura and Chad Folker are veterans at Farm Show, having shown their market pigs there for several years. This week will find them in their usual location in the swine barn, doing what they like to do most — preparing their pigs for the show.

Children of Mr. and Mrs. Tony Folker, R.D. 2, New Holland, Laura and Chad work together on their swine projects, sharing not only the work but also the profits.

Members of the New Holland Community Club, Laura has been a member for six years and Chad for four. They have also taken photography and rabbits, and Chad has taken handyman and rocketry.

Chad would like to repeat his achievement of three years ago

when he won grand champion at Farm show at the age of nine. He showed a Chester-white barrow and has his picture in the hallway of the Farm Show for the honor. His father Tony, says he believes he is one of the youngest ever to show a grand champion. Hatfield purchased that prize winner for \$15 a pound. Unfortunately, Laura's pig was disqualified that year for being overweight.

This year they will be showing either two Hampshires or one Hampshire and one cross. Tony said that the warm weather of this winter has the pigs growing better than they normally would, partly because they have been able to remain outside which is healthier for them.

There will be no disqualification because of weight this year because Tony explained that they

have done away with a weight limit. There is a bottom weight of 190 pounds, and Tony said that a "good heavy hog usually can beat a good lightweight hog." There will be 12 weight classes at Farm Show.

He explains that with scales at home you can push a hog in the final weeks, and weigh every week to keep track of their progress.

Both children say they usually don't mind having to sell their market hogs after a show, but Chad qualifies that by saying, "It's hard only if they did good." Laura says, "I mind it if I work with them a lot I don't eat pork."

Swine projects can be profitable if you have champions, the Folker children have discovered. In the past two years they have had three champions which totaled \$5,000. Tony explained that the children split the prize money and put it in the bank as well as using it to purchase something for themselves. Normally, however, breaking even is what they expect to do with the projects.

The Folker children are not unaccustomed to winning. At this year's Lancaster County pig round-up, Laura won grand champion with a Hampshire gilt. Chad was first in his class and had reserve heavyweight champion. In fitting and showing Chad was second and Laura was third.

At the Ephrata Fair Chad out-placed Laura with a first in the heavyweight class. Laura had second and they both showed Hampshire gilts. In fitting Chad was first and Laura was third. Chad was second in showmanship and Laura was fourth in showing.

At the New Holland Fair Laura also took grand champion with a Hampshire and was second in the



Laura's brother, Chad, 11, will also be in the thick of swine competition at Farm Show. The fourth-grader has logged four years in the 4-H program.



Laura Folker, 13, feeds one of her pigs that will go to Farm Show. The Garden Spot seventh-grader is a member of the New Holland Community Club.

showmanship contest. Chad placed first in showmanship in the 12-and-under category.

Preparing the pigs for a show is not easy, and Laura says she doesn't like giving them a bath, but likes clipping ears and tails. Chad says he prefers the showmanship aspect.

Both children have had considerable experience in the showing, both locally and nationally, having had opportunities to show at the national Chester White spotlight sales and shows. At these shows, where Tony works as an unofficial field man helping with the show and sales, they borrow a gilt and show with kids from around the country. Tony says, "It is good practice and they get to show against a lot of kids. It gets pretty serious."

Laura explains that pigs can be

shown with either a whip or a cane. The whip is used to guide the pigs, which should be kept between the showman and the judge.

Using the national exposure as a learning experience, Tony explains that the judges are usually very good in telling the kids what they did wrong. There is also the opportunity to win trophies or canes.

Asked how the children decided to have swine for 4-H projects, Tony replies, "We've always had pigs. We had 200 sows until a few years ago. He was the proprietor of Pork Chop Farm, but now works with Four Seasons Landscapers in New Holland, something he enjoys and feels uses some of his farming knowledge."

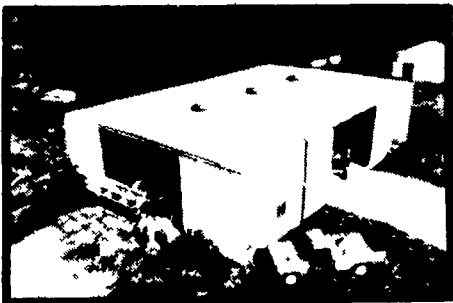
The children's 4-H projects are

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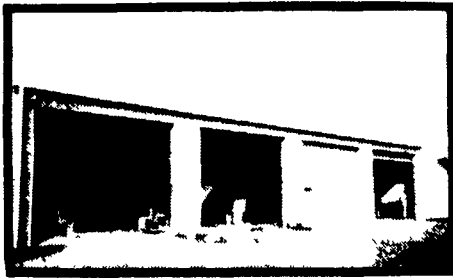
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