

# Hanover hog producer offers \$100 bills to lucky youth exhibitors

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HANOVER — Roger Bankert likes to give out hundred-dollar bills.

Bankert, a Hanover hog producer, handed out three of the triple-digit greenbacks last year to lucky youth pig project exhibitors.

Admittedly, there's a catch to the giveaway. To cash in on Bankert's generosity, a 4-H or FFA member must take the grand champion prize at a local show or roundup with a hog purchased through the Bankert family's spring project sale.

A gimmick? Perhaps. But that's what Bankert and his wife, Darlene, figure will help generate interest from area youth in their sales offerings, plus give the purchaser and added boost to do an especially good job in raising the project animal.

The Bankert family is now finalizing plans for the third annual sale. One hundred of their best eight-week crossed and purebred feeders are lined up for that auction on April 19 at the York Fairgrounds, beginning at 7 p.m.

The initial offer of the hundred dollar prize to champion winners was made at the first sale in 1983. Two winners claimed the cash that first season from the York and Adams county roundups. The three lucky recipients were the York and Lebanon 4-H roundup champs and York Fair champion overall during 1984. Word of the bonus quickly made the rounds of youthful exhibitors, and sharpened interest and determination to cop the Bankert award.

Original intent of the sale was to provide area youngsters with selection of suitable project possibilities. That purpose has

been well served, with nearly every offering purchased by or for youth project use. Most buyers, in fact, make multiple purchases.

Bankert's interest, however, doesn't stop at the sales clerk's table. He follows up on the project pigs as much as possible, stopping to check with owners on their progress during the season, and offering advice on care and feeding.

"Feed good quality feed," is his capsule recommendation for raising high-placing hogs. That means an 18-percent protein feed for the first three to four weeks, then dropping back to and maintaining a 16-percent level. "And keep your hog clean and healthy," he added.

About a month prior to the show or roundup date, Bankert suggests that pig owners put their animals on an exercise program, walking them daily, to maintain the judge-pleasing, lean, meaty, muscled look.

Bankert acquired his own first hog for FFA use in 1959, when his uncle helped the high school freshman purchase a bred Chester White gilt at the Farm Show sale. Of the nine pigs in her first litter, he was able to raise eight, forming the core of his beginning hog herd.

He returned the following year, and took home the Farm Show champion for a final bid of \$160, a considerable investment at that time for a project hog.

"I scraped money together, and went back again the next year, and bought the reserve champion, for \$190," relates Bankert.

But the young swine breeder turned pioneer in 1966, when he purchased the first purebred Duroc brought into York County.

"I thought it was an up and

coming breed," he says of the now popular rusty-red colored hogs. "Feed companies were already seeing the trend at that time." The addition a few years later of two Ohio top-bred Durocs to the Bankert breeding lines "really put us into the Duroc business."

Today, says the purebred promoter, Durocs comprise the nation's largest breed of recorded-pedigree hogs. About two thousand Durocs are registered annually in Pennsylvania alone.

Satisfied customers continue to purchase Bankert purebred and crossed stock on a regular basis. With a breeding herd of 35 Durocs, a half-dozen Chester Whites and one Berkshire, there is always a selection available.

Boar hog sales comprise a large portion of the merchandising animals and Bankert has established a reputation for his outstanding sire stock. One boar he sold in 1980 holds the state Duroc sale record, commanding a \$2,100 price.

Although word-of-mouth recommendations bring in a flow of buyers, a regular advertising program covers area farm and local newspapers, as well as breed publications. The family is also well-known on the hog show circuit, frequently placing in the top at local York shows, the Pennsylvania Farm Show, Maryland State Fair, and some national competition in the past.

While "stringbean" hogs were in vogue until just recently, Bankert saw a change in judging last year, with officials eyeing a shorter-legged pig.

A judge in his own right, Bankert says he looks for "basics." He wants hogs to be sound and meaty with gilts showing femininity and "boars that look like boars." Judging prerequisites, though, all point back to the finished carcass, the bottom line in hog breeding goals.

Following in parental footsteps, the Bankert's three children have managed to make their own marks in local hog arenas.

Daughter Michelle, now married and living near the family hog operation, gained widespread media attention in 1981, when she earned a whopping \$19.50 per pound bid on her 240-pound Farm Show champion. It was a high point in a 4-H career colored with frequent purple champion rosettes and shining trophies.

Brian, a high school junior, and 13-year-old Greg, continue to snag top spots with their hogs, often those purchased through the family sale, using earnings from previous project pigs. And, both boys make a point of selecting hogs with no advice from either parent,



A jay, a favorite of Roger Bankert's herd boars, is the sire of several of the youth project pigs to be offered in the family's April 19 sale at the York Fairgrounds.



The Bankert sons keep their own selections a highly-guarded secret until all the bidding is through. Greg, the youngest, does some lengthy observation of the stock to see which fit his requirements in a project pig.

then bidding right along with other sale contenders. Occasionally, one feeder they've specifically singled out tops their price range, and sends them back to the catalog for an alternative choice.

With his purchase from the 1983 sale, Brian topped the county's late-season roundup, and collected the hundred-dollar bonus from his dad. His selection savvy earned the 4-H'er a second success, when last spring's buys captured the roundup pairs championship. In addition to his hogs, Brian is raising a flock of project sheep.

While younger brother Greg hasn't yet snagged one of his dad's greenback awards, he was in the

running for a while at the county roundup, when an entry took the middleweight division honors. Coming that close has made him even more determined to try again.

Both have already spent considerable time studying project possibilities, but are keeping their choices a well-guarded secret. It's a sure bet, though, that come sale night on April 19, they'll be in the crowd of bidders, pitting their hog selection knowledge against that of dozens of other buyers. And behind those bids will be hopes for the eventual payoff of a purple champion rosette - and the Bankert greenback bonus.



York County 4-H'er Tim Ferrence took champion honors at the 1984 late summer hog roundup, and earned a hundred-dollar cash award from breeder Roger Bankert.



Well known among swine producers, the family is highly supportive of the pork industry and especially youth exhibitors. From left are Brian, Greg, Roger and Darlene.

