

# Variety is the spice of farming

BY JACK HUBLEY

**YORK SPRINGS** — To members of the Pennsylvania Pork Producers Council, David A. Reinecker is best known as Pennsylvania's Pork All-American for 1985.

But a closer look at this energetic Adams County farmer reveals that a more accurate label might be All-Around Person. Here's a partial list of reasons why Dave can't afford to sleep late:

He is currently vice president of the PPPC, director of the South-central PPC and has served as a delegate to the National PPC for the last four years. He's also president of the York Springs Borough Council, and a member of the town's fire company and ambulance board.

On the sports front, Reinecker manages a softball team and serves as a PIAA basketball official.

He's also a member of the Bermudian Young Farmers, the Adams County Farmers Association and a 4-H advisor.

And during the week he's available for substitute teaching. "I've taught every subject in the high school," notes Dave, pointing out that his duties have included sewing dresses and baking bread in home economics.

"But he's not a good cook," adds his mom, Mrs. Mary Jane Reinecker. "He doesn't even know the difference between beef broth and dish water," she chuckles.

But he knows a good feeder pig when he sees one.

After earning a chemistry degree from Western Maryland College in 1977, Dave returned home to join his father Ray on the family's 150-acre livestock and crop farm near York Springs.

"I felt a calling very similar to what a lot of people feel in the ministry," he recalls. And as might be expected, Dave lists "diversity" as his favorite branch of farming, although he confesses a special fondness for livestock.

"My dad's a crops person and I'm a livestock person, so we've meshed well in that respect," he notes.

To augment farm income, Dave added a swine finishing operation in 1977, which remains totally under his ownership. He spends about 20 to 30 hours a week tending his hogs, with an additional 40 hours devoted to his father's cropping and beef operations.

With his father's help, Dave built his first finishing hut in 1978, and purchased three similar units the following spring. Each of the four huts contains two pens, with a capacity of 35 head per pen. All four units are elevated over a 16 x 64-foot manure pit. The pit's six-foot depth provides nine months of storage capacity, with spreading done during spring corn planting and fall barley seeding.

All of Reinecker's feeder pigs are bought locally, with about one-half coming from his uncle, Stan Reinecker, also of York Springs.

## FEED EFFICIENCY

For the past several years Dave has maintained a 3.1 feed efficiency, which compares favorably with the national average of about 3.5 to 3.6, he notes. He attributes much of his hogs' performance to good genetics and attention to feeder adjustment.

"You can literally lose a ton of feed through poor feeder adjustment," he emphasizes, adding that keeping his feed conversion



On the home front, Dave and his wife Cheryl have another "herd" to manage. What are Andrew (left) and Jonathan having for lunch? Ham, of course.

numbers 10 to 15 percent below the average is vital with today's slim profit margins.

High Octane concentrate mixed with his own corn. During the summer months the corn is supplemented with about 25 percent barley. "Barley is lower in energy and higher in protein than corn," Dave says, "and in the summer the hogs don't need to produce as much body heat. So I lower the energy intake and raise the protein level to compensate for the lack of consumption. I find the hogs can stand the heat stress a little better," he observes.

In an effort to minimize disease problems, Dave isolates all incoming feeder pigs in the farm's retired chicken house for their first month. Worming is also an important part of his health program. And all pigs receive low-level dosages of Tylan as a growth promotant, says Dave, noting that his total antibiotic bills run only about 30 to 40 cents per pig.

Reinecker's management strategy, combined with modest financial obligations, permitted him to produce a pound of pork for 43 cents in 1984.

## MARKETING STRATEGY

And in keeping with his ideas on diversification, Dave doesn't put all of his pork in one basket come market time. About half of his pigs go to Hatfield, with the balance being distributed among four local butchers.



Steers are fattened on a high quality barlage-alfalfa-corn silage mix. Taper-board feeder is a Reinecker original, with wood coming from the family's own trees.

Each market has different preferences, which Reinecker sees as an advantage. One market, for example, does a brisk business in pig's feet, so pigs with white feet are preferred, since white hogs are easier to clean, says Dave. "One of my other markets skins all their hogs, (as opposed to scalding) so they don't care what color the skin is. And I have another market that doesn't care if they're male or female; they just want lean." Catering to a broad spectrum of demands allows Dave to find the best market for all of his hogs.

Though the hog business is Dave's own enterprise, his farm chores run the gamut from fixing an ailing John Deere to feeding the farm's 125-head beef herd. The Reineckers farm 260 acres of corn about 80 acres of soybeans, 50 acres of barley and 10 acres of alfalfa to take care of their "grocery" needs.

## QUALITY SILAGE

Corn to be ensiled is chopped off just below the ear to produce high

quality silage. "It looks kind of funny to see two-foot-tall cornstalks in the field, but we want a higher percentage of grain to fodder," says Dave. "The cattle eat less because they're full of grain, so it doesn't take any more acres to finish out an animal."

And for the first time this year, getting those acres planted in corn will also be included in Dave's duties. Dave's father, who normally handles planting chores, will be off duty due to a heart attack that laid him low the day before Easter.

Like most farmers, Dave takes the long hours in stride, but he's not pleased about current commodity prices. Though hog numbers are down nationwide, prices indicate that demand for pork products is sliding, as well. Promotion is the answer, says Reinecker, a staunch fan of the PPPC's check-off program.

"We have to market our own product," stresses Dave, noting



Proper feeder adjustment is crucial to improving feed efficiency, says Reinecker.



Reinecker finishes 800 to 1,000 hogs a year in his four hog huts. With removable front and rear panels and monoslope roof, huts are easy to cool. Sprinklers located in the rear of pens keep floors cool in mid-summer.