

Campaigning Farm Show beef is Nissley family tradition

BY SALLY BAIR
Staff Correspondent

MOUNT JOY — For Derek and Michelle Nissley, a trip to the Farm Show each year has become a family tradition. It is, in fact, a continuation of a tradition begun by their father, Marvin, when he was a 4-H member in Lancaster County. Now a leader, Marvin encouraged his children to join 4-H as soon as they were old enough to enjoy the advantages he did as an involved 4-H'er.

Michelle, 13, will be showing in Harrisburg for the fourth time, and admits that one reason she likes to take her steer to the Farm Show is that "I get to keep the steer longer. It is very hard to give it up." Those 4-H'ers who are not selected or who choose not to go to Farm Show must sell their 4-H animals after the county and district shows in November.

Derek, 11, is going for the third year, and says, "I like to show. It is more crowded at the Farm Show, and I like showing there." Since a full-grown steer is somewhat larger than Derek, a natural question is, do his project animals ever try to get away while he is showing them? "They never tried to get away," he says.

Michelle points out, "Showing is a payoff for hard work. I like getting the steers ready to show, although it is a chore to get them ready now because it is so cold." Activity becomes more intense as the show draws near. Derek says, "It's a daily thing for the last three or four weeks."

How do they feel their chances are at the Farm Show? Derek answers honestly, "It depends on the judge. I don't always agree with the judge."

Michelle says, "I won't do extremely well, but I think I'll place pretty good. It depends on the judge." Mrs. Nissley interjects, "You learn not to get your hopes too high."

Both the Nissley children are showing Angus-Chianina crosses. At the county round-up, where they were selected as eligible to attend the Harrisburg show, Michelle showed first in the lightweight class, and Derek showed fifth in lightweight. They both hope their animals will show as middleweights at the Farm Show.

Derek's animal was reserve champion at the Elizabethtown Fair and Michelle's was second in the class at that fair.

The Nissleys leave the care of their animals at the Farm Show to the caretakers who provide for all the Lancaster County steers. Once there, however, Michelle says, "We all help each other."

She also admits that some friends from the W.I. Beam Junior High School where she is in eighth grade "think it's weird" that she shows a steer, but she adds, "I don't care." Actually a few years ago Derek's whole class traveled to Harrisburg to watch him show. He attends the Maytown Elementary School.

Is money the key to Farm Show's popularity? Actually, Michelle points out that prices aren't any better there than at the county show, but the steers will weigh more. It means that they make just a little more. However, Michelle notes, "We have to pay off the loan that we took to purchase the steer, and the rest of the money goes into our savings account. We don't make very much."

While total numbers being shown



Working together makes the work go easier for Mount Joy's Derek and Michelle Nissley. But they both admit that saying goodbye to two steers is doubly difficult.

from Lancaster County are down this year, Mrs. Nissley says that actually makes it nicer, because there is more space for those who are showing. She says many are choosing not to hold their steers if they are finished at round-up.

The Nissleys mostly purchase local steers, although for next year they have an animal purchased in Indiana. Michelle got first pick on next year's animal, so she chose the steer from Indiana. When asked if it is a problem for the two children to make the initial selection, Mrs. Nissley says, "It usually works out."

Being in 4-H is very much a part of the lives of Derek and Michelle.

Derek says he likes it because he gets to meet a lot of people. Also, he says, "It makes you have more responsibility for something."

Michelle agrees that being in 4-H and caring for a steer teaches some valuable lessons. "You're responsible for your own steer and getting it ready. You also learn to handle money."

Michelle admits that this year she is dealing with a steer that has changed considerably over the

months of preparation. "At the beginning my steer was awful. He was very hard to break to lead. He was one of the worst ones I had, but he's changed a lot." In fact, she

now acknowledges, "I cry when I sell them. You can't help getting attached to them."

Derek agrees. "It is hard to sell them." He adds that his steer was tame from the beginning. Because they share the chores as they care for their animals, they also get attached to each other's animals, a double burden on sale day.

Of course the goal for any interested 4-H'er is always the ultimate title - grand champion steer at Farm Show. Do Michelle and Derek aspire to the title? Michelle answers, "It's a goal. It means your steer is the best steer."

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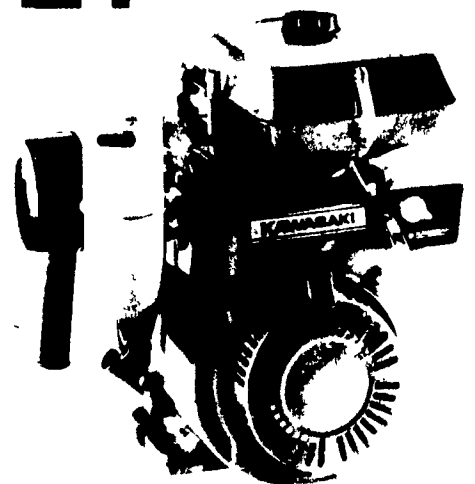
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