

Junior livestock sale caps Farm Show Week

BY JACK HUBLEY

HARRISBURG — The ribbons, plaques and trophies had all been awarded. The applause had died and the crowds had thinned. For Farm Show's young livestock exhibitors all that remained on Friday was the sale of their entries to a host of faithful buyers who turn out year after year to support the state's 4-H and FFA livestock programs.

Ironically, sale time becomes the most difficult hurdle of all for many of the same exhibitors who had worked the hardest for top Farm Show market honors. Regardless of the premium placed on the show's best steers, lambs and hogs, the parting is never easy.

Once again the sale began with the market hogs, and Hatfield Packing headed the list of buyers, purchasing 95 of the sale's total of 169 head, including the grand champion. Exhibited by Lehigh County's Todd Bennecoff, the top pig sold for \$10 a pound for a total of \$2,360.

Danny George of George's

Foodliner, Bethlehem, paid \$1,452 for Chad Folker's reserve champion after offering the top bid of \$6 a pound.

The Country Butcher Shop of Carlisle bought Greg Christman's champion middleweight for \$1.75 per pound, and Emery's Buying Station went home with Dave Hess's lightweight champion after offering \$1.45. The remaining reserve division champions all went to Hatfield Packing.

The hog sale total reached \$32,167, for an average of 83 cents a pound with champions, and 74 cents not counting the top entries.

Leroy Fox of Fox's Markets can be labeled a "champion" Farm Show buyer in more ways than one. With the top bid of \$50 a pound, Fox bought his 10th consecutive Farm Show champion market lamb, this year exhibited by Joe Kuzemchak of Pleasant Gap, Centre County. The total tab for the 137-pound lamb came to \$6,850.

The show's reserve champion, shown by Christin Chupp of New Holland, Lancaster County, sold for \$8 a pound to Willie the Butcher



For nearly 20 years Danny George (left) of George's Foodliner has been going home with Farm Show's grand champion steer. This year he paid \$11,648 for Mike Messick's champion. Secretary of Agriculture Richard Grubb was on hand to congratulate Messick.



Leroy Fox (left) of Fox's Markets paid \$6,850 for Joe Kuzemchak's top market lamb. Also pictured are Fox's grandchildren, Jeremy (left) and Jason Fox.

of Stauffers of Kissel Hill.

Walter M. Dunlap & Sons of Lancaster bought Margaret Herr's champion light heavyweight for \$1.50, and Evergreen Tractor Co. of Lebanon offered the top bid of \$1.10 for Mark Tracy's champion middleweight.

The sale's 122 lambs sold for an average per-head price of \$158.89 counting the champions, and \$104.81 not counting the top lambs.

The small arena's bleachers swelled with spectators with the opening of the steer sale, traditionally the highest priced sale of the day.

For nearly two decades, Danny George, of George's Foodliner, Bethlehem, has been buying the champion Farm Show steer. This year he kept his record intact by offering a bid of \$9.10 per pound for Mike Messick's champion Chianina-Angus champion. The total bill for the Dauphin County exhibitor's 1,280-pound steer came to \$11,648.

A new Farm Show buyer, Bonanza Steak House of Thornedale, took home the reserve champion. Exhibited by Kelly Rohrer of Manheim, the show's number-two beef went for \$3.20 per pound for a total of \$4,224.

Carlos R. Leffler, Inc., of Richland offered the top bid of \$2.50 per pound for the champion middleweight steer shown by Lebanon County's Leigh Hitz. The champion lightweight steer, shown by Dwayne Coble of Lebanon County, went to Willie the Butcher for a bid of \$1.10.

Michelle Dean's reserve

champion middleweight went to Glen Kilmer for 76 cents a pound, and Nichole High's reserve lightweight steer was purchased by Fulton Bank for 83 cents a pound.

The 107 steers sold for \$116,694. Overall, the per-pound sale average was 89 cents with champions and 79 cents without.



Jerry Clemens (left) bought Todd Bennecoff's grand champion hog for \$10 a pound.

Farm Show's other champions invest in youth

BY JACK HUBLEY

HARRISBURG — Purple rosettes, golden trophies and championship titles provide pleasant memories. But in the final analysis nothing breeds competition like the color green—in the form of cash, of course.

And from a monetary standpoint, no other Keystone State livestock show rewards its winners more handsomely than the Farm Show's market animal events.

After running the gauntlet of the state's stiffest competition, the lucky exhibitor of the show's top steer and hog can expect to earn in the neighborhood of eight to 10 dollars a pound for his efforts. What the lamb sale lacks in total poundage, it makes up for in price. Last year's champion topped out at \$60 a pound, with the 1985 champion dipping only \$10 to \$50 a pound.

No buyer will refute the statement that going home with a county or state champion market animal is good public relations. But just how much that PR is worth in terms of advertising dollars is open to argument.

"I do believe it pays in the long run," says Wilmer Kreider, owner of the four Willie the Butcher stores operating from Stauffers of Kissel Hill's four Lancaster County locations. "I'm convinced that

every dollar I spend at the fairs comes back to me," Kreider says emphatically.

Wilmer Kreider practices what he preaches. In addition to the Farm Show, he attends six county fairs and roundups, spending an average of \$3,000 to \$5,000 on junior market animals.

Kreider has purchased Farm Show animals for the past eight years, and this year's tab came to nearly \$7,000 for eight lambs and four steers.

But, when it comes to buying show champions, a cash return is not foremost in Kreider's mind. Rarely does he run special promotions or raise the price of his fair purchases across the meat counter. "I believe in agriculture and I believe in young people," Kreider says, pointing out that attracting youth to the livestock industry is one way to insure a bright future for agriculture.

Jerry Clemens of Hatfield Packing Company concurs. Although a number of hog producers have begun selling to Hatfield because of the company's involvement with youth, Clemens maintains that Hatfield's prime motivation for attending some 50 to 60 shows annually is to promote the raising of livestock. "We want to keep the young people interested in agriculture, because we're going

to need product down the road," says Clemens.

Although Hatfield has failed to go home with the top Farm Show hog only once since 1975, Clemens emphasizes that the company's goal is to support the entire show. "We don't sit there just to buy the champion," he says. At last Friday's sale, Hatfield bought a total of 125 Farm Show hogs, including 95 in the sale, 10 hogs that were resold and an additional 20 overweight hogs that never made it to the auction block.

Clemens notes that the firm's involvement with livestock shows dates back more than two decades, and will continue into the foreseeable future.

Although he's best known as Farm Show's grand champion steer buyer, Danny George also believes in supporting the entire sale, and does so by buying numerous animals of all three species. George, who owns George's Foodliner of Bethlehem, spent more than \$25,000 for 10 steers, 20 hogs and 15 lambs this year. He's been a Farm Show regular for a quarter of a century, and has missed buying the grand champion steer only once in the past 15 years.

Although George's active bidding has a major impact on Farm

Show sale prices, this year's \$25,000 tab represents only about 25 or 30 percent of his total annual investment in junior livestock events.

In addition to buying at Farm Show and many county fairs, he sponsors an annual 4-H dinner during the week following Farm Show. The event is held at the Glass Slipper, a restaurant in Bethlehem owned by his daughter, and all 4-H'ers eat free of charge. This year 250 people attended the banquet.

His involvement with youth shows can hardly be considered a money-making proposition, notes George, who has no idea how much advertising value buying show champions may have. Nor does he care.

"I get a lot of satisfaction out of it," George notes. "I like the kids, and they get a lot out of it, too."

Like Danny George, Leroy Fox derives a lot of satisfaction from supporting junior market events even though he's more of a specialist. The owner of Fox's Markets, with locations in Middletown, Hershey, Harrisburg and the Cedar Cliff Mall, Fox buys only lambs at Farm Show. "I think there's a lot that can be done with lamb, but it isn't a meat that's really been promoted," says Fox. Just as buying the champion

Farm Show steer has become a tradition for Danny George, Fox normally buys the top lamb. In addition to offering the top bid of \$50 a pound for this year's champion, Fox also was high bidder on 46 other lambs, bringing his total Farm Show tab to \$14,300.

"At one time we bought beef at the Farm Show," recalls Fox. "Then a couple of kids came up to me and talked about their lambs. I watched the kids selling their lambs, and I thought, gee, that's great."

Fox has been buying Farm Show lambs for 12 years, now, and has no intention of discontinuing his support. "We could spend dollars and get a lot more out of it, but here you're helping the kids," says Fox. "I think that 4-H is a tremendous program."

Curiously enough, Fox's involvement with youth livestock shows seems to have come full circle. After returning home with his Farm Show purchases last year, Fox found that one of the lambs he had bought was going to be a mother. Since he and his wife live on a farm, the solution was obvious.

After more than a decade of supporting junior livestock activities, Leroy Fox finally had a "4-H project" of his own.