

Variety Is The Spice Of Farm Life For Vought Family

BY BARBARA MILLER

Lycoming Co. Correspondent

DUSHORE — Whether you drizzle maple syrup on your pancakes in the morning, broil a lamb chop for supper, or snack on potato chips later, there is a chance the Voughts of Sullivan County had a hand in it. On their 350 acre century farm, three generations of Voughts grow potatoes for Wise Potato Chips, Berwick, run a sizable maple syrup operation, keep a flock of 120 ewes and lambs, and shear sheep in a three-county area. In addition they do a bit of crop farming and run a small beef operation.

According to 78-year-old David

Vought, third generation of Voughts to own the farm since 1850, diversification has been characteristic of their family for quite some time.

"We were married during the depression and you had to do anything you could to get a dollar to live on," David recalls.

Although the Voughts have always farmed, made maple syrup for at least their own use, and kept sheep, David recalls that for a time he had a dairy herd and over the years he hauled milk, whitewashed barns, and among other things even hauled coal to make ends meet. "I don't know we got it all in," he reflects.

David says he still does a lot of plowing, discing and dragging the fields although he takes time off to enjoy a trip to Canada now and then.

Potatoes, which the Voughts have been raising commercially for the past 45 to 50 years, according to Harvey, David's son, are their main crop. Each year, he says, they plant 50 acres of potatoes and harvest about 10,000 hundredweight, or 500 to 600 tons, which are sold to Wise Potato Chip Co., Berwick.

Two trailer loads of Kennebec, Norchip and an unnamed variety of potatoes are received each spring by the Voughts to be used as seed. These varieties, Harvey says are "dry potatoes."

"When potatoes are in cold storage some of the starch turns to sugar which burns and makes the potato chips dark," explains Harvey. With the varieties listed above, he says, less of the starch turns to sugar, making them much better suited for potato chips.

Further, he says, when potatoes are to be used for chips they are kept at a temperature of 50 degrees which keeps the starch from turning to sugar. Whereas potatoes destined for ordinary consumption are stored at temperatures of 38 to 40 degrees to help prevent sprouting.

Before planting begins around the middle of May, the potatoes are put through a machine which cuts them into smaller pieces for planting. The machine grades them according to size and then cuts the larger ones into four pieces and halves the smaller ones before they are planted by machine.

Besides specifying certain varieties and special storage procedures, Harvey says, Wise's also requires that the potatoes should be 1-7/8 inches to 4 inches long and weigh no more than one pound with no less than 15 percent being number-one potatoes.

Around the beginning of September, Harvey reports, they begin picking potatoes by hand. Although they tried harvesting them by machine, they found with the stones in their soil it didn't work very well, and they returned to harvesting the potatoes by hand.

The Voughts store their potatoes in a new 120-by-30-foot-wide structure constructed August 1986 to replace one lost in a fire the previous January. The new building features nine inches of Fiberglass and two inches of styrofoam insulation on the sidewalls plus twelve inches of fiberglass on the ceiling.

Despite this, Harvey reports, that last year they lost some potatoes in storage. He thinks a change in the varieties they grow will correct the problem this year. The Voughts' potatoes are marketed from November through February. Harvey adds that Wise uses several different varieties, buying potatoes from all over the country throughout the year. "Our little crop wouldn't last them a day," he observes.

Each year in March, two months before they start planting potatoes the Vought family, including cousins and other relatives, congregates a short distance from their homestead at the maple sugar shed. There they continue what has always been a Vought rite of spring, the making of maple syrup.

Originally, Harvey says, his ancestors made enough maple syrup for their own use to be used as a sweetener. But over the years they increased the size of their operation until today they average 450 gallons of syrup per season.

"Everybody enjoys making syrup," Harvey says. "You always know spring is coming. Dad has



Harvey Vought with 900 hundredweights of seed potatoes.



Making maple syrup is an annual rite of spring for the Vought family. Here David and his grandson Carl show some 1300 buckets used to tap sugar maple trees.




Carl takes a head count of his flock of Suffolk-Rambouillet ewes and lambs. The flock totals about 120.



Carl displays one of his Rambouillet rams.

LIVESTOCK LATEST






Pork Prose

by
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Heat and Hogs

If you gave a pig his choice of environments around the world, he would probably settle in a warm or tropical location. That's where people found pigs when the first hog farms were invented 7000 years ago. And even the wild pigs of today seem to roam in the warmer climates.

Then why does a 400-pound sow, or for that matter a 200-pound hog, have such a miserable time when temperatures reach the 90s? Have we changed hogs that drastically in the last 70 centuries? No. But we've changed their surroundings - so much that pigs in a typical confinement building are at your mercy to stay comfortable.

In a confinement building, when the temperature is too high, the pig usually finds a wet spot in the pen. If there is none, the best he can do is lie on his side and pant. When that happens, it's costing you money.

Effects of Heat on Growing-Finishing Hogs

High temperatures take their toll on hog performance. Studies at Nebraska and Kansas State show that high temperatures cause hogs to eat less feed, and grow more slowly and less efficiently. For example, in a 95-degree environment, gains were cut by more than half and hogs needed an extra two pounds of feed to make a pound of gain, compared to those housed at 68 degrees.

If performance were gouged that severely for just two weeks, it would add eight days to the time to market and an extra 24 pounds of feed per head. For many producers, that would cost more than \$2 a hog.

Effects of Heat on Replacement Gilts

A study at Missouri compared 60 and 90 degree temperatures for replacement gilts. Only 20 percent of the gilts in the high temperature group were in heat by 230 days of

age, compared to 90 percent of those housed in moderate temperatures. The 90 degree heat also caused an increase in water intake from 1.3 gallons to 4.3 gallons per head per day and a jump in respiratory rate from 35 to 111 breaths per minute. (Normal respiration rate for hogs and sows is 15 to 35 per minute. A respiration rate over 50 is a sign of heat stress.)

Effects of Heat on Sows

Sows, like hogs, lose their appetite when the temperature soars. In a Texas Tech study, sows housed at 59 degrees ate about 14 pounds of feed per day during lactation. At 90 degrees, sows cut feed intake by 3 1/2 pounds and lactational weight losses climbed from 4 pounds to 47 pounds.

In a Kansas State study, lactating sows housed in 87-degree heat increased their daily feed intake by two pounds when they were housed under drip coolers. That translated into a 12 pound heavier litter weight at weaning.

When hot weather comes late in gestation and through the farrowing period it increases farrowing time. That can smother piglets since their umbilical cords often break before they reach the end of the birth canal. Studies at Nebraska show that 100-degree temperatures can boost the stillborn rate to more than 5 pigs per litter.

Effects of Heat on Boars

Most producers know the harmful effects of high temperatures on boars. Sex drive goes down. Semen volume drops. And under certain conditions, sperm fertility can drop to zero. The fertility isn't affected for five or six weeks, often after the hot weather (or fever) is past. Effects are worse when the nights don't cool down -

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