

# FFA, 4-H Pave Eaton's Path To Success

BY LISA RISSER

RED LION (York Co.) — John Eaton, 18, is a slender, unassuming young man with a quick, engaging smile. He looks very much like a typical Penn State student. The first clue that he is a special person comes with a glimpse of his intense concentration on his FFA and 4-H projects. The next, and most obvious, clue comes upon entering his bedroom where a visitor is overwhelmed, even awed, by the assortment of plaques, trophies, ribbons, and awards that cover the walls and his desk.

John, an animal bio-science major, is involved in beef, sheep, and swine breeding and finishing. His list of accomplishments is long, and other than the most prestigious, he has trouble remembering all the awards that he has received. He was named 1987 Youth of the Year by the Pennsylvania Dorset Breeders Association, was third in the state FFA livestock judging competition and won a silver medal at the national contest, was awarded the Keystone Farmer Degree, was the top state 4-H meats judger and number one in the national competition, and won the Stockman's competition at last year's Keystone International Livestock Exhibition.

In addition John and his animals have won a galaxy of shows. Last year alone he had champion and reserve champion market hogs, champion and reserve champion Dorset rams and ewes, and champion and reserve champion Suffolk rams and ewes. He also has had the champion steer at the York County Roundup for three consecutive years. He was president of the 4-H beef club for two years, the 4-H sheep club for one year, and his FFA club for one year.

Perhaps the reason John is

untouched by the bravado that often accompanies success like his, is that he knows how much work it took to get there. "It takes time and preparation to get an animal ready to show," he said. "In order to get them to know you, you must work with them."

John's work includes hours of handling, trimming, clipping, and setting up the animals. It also encompasses exercise for the steers and lambs. While the steers are walked in the field, the lambs leap hurdles that John sets up outside the shed-turned-barn.

His menagerie currently consists of a 15-sheep Dorset breeding flock and a beef heifer due to calve in April. Not too long ago it also included of a small flock of Suffolk, market hogs, market steers, and market lambs.

Spending time with his animals isn't hard for John who believes "You can take pride in what you do because if you work with them and they do well, you know you're time was worth it."

John puts a lot of time and energy into preparing for livestock and meats judging contests. He studied and practiced with his teammates at frequent, regular intervals, and shortly before a competition John would bone up on his terminology.

It was his presentation and vocabulary in addition to subject knowledge that helped John excel in the judging contests. He found that although the officials may not agree with a contestant's placing of the animals, "they didn't take off as long as you explained the main points of the animals. Like if you placed a small steer ahead of a large one, you'd have to explain that while the first-place steer is small, it has a structural correctness that the second-place one lacks. They looked for smooth



A resident of Red Lion in York County, Eaton lives with his family on Triple J Acres.

presentations."

John credits much of his success to FFA. "It's helped me a lot. It influenced me to look for a career in agriculture, and it influenced my preference in animals. I used to be strictly beef. Now I'm primarily sheep," John explained.

A 4-H beef club member since he was nine, John became interested in steers when his father, John Sr., began raising a few. Later, John got involved in raising market lambs. His interest in sheep breeding and hogs stemmed from FFA projects. "I enjoy working with animals and with FFA, I got the opportunity to expand my projects and to learn about animals."

Working with the animals also taught John about responsibility and patience. "Sheep especially make you learn patience because they never cooperate," John commented with a laugh.

John enjoys the time he has spent in FFA, including his year of leadership as president of his chapter. He would encourage anyone interested in agriculture to join FFA. "It's a good learning experience. I'd tell that person that down the road he'd be glad he did join. I know I am."

Although John hasn't completely nailed down his choice in careers, he plans to work in the agricultural industry. No matter what he chooses it's a safe bet that he'll be using knowledge and skills he learned through Future Farmers of America and 4-H.



John Eaton, 18, has won many awards during his years in FFA and 4-H. Most recently, he was named the 1987 Youth of the Year by the Pennsylvania Dorset Breeders Association, won 4-H meats judging competitions on the state and national levels, and won the Stockman's competition at the Keystone International Livestock Exposition.



Eaton's rams are kept in a field adjacent to the shed-turned-barn where his ewes, lambs, and beef are kept. He borrowed the goat from a friend to help keep predators from his prize-winning animals.



Eaton currently has a flock of 15 Dorset breeding sheep, many of which are home bred. This year his home-bred sheep took champion and reserve ram and ewe honors in FFA competition.

## Extension Home Economist Named

CHAMBERSBURG — Eleanor Garris has been appointed Franklin County Extension Home Economist effective January 18, 1988, according to County Extension Director, John Z. Shearer. Garris, a native of Franklin County, and presently living near Shippenburg, will fill the position formerly occupied by Nancy Hogg, who retired last September.



Eleanor Garris

In her new position, Garris will be responsible for conducting both adult and youth educational programs of the Penn State University Cooperative Extension Service...in cooperation with the Franklin County Cooperative Extension Association. She will be in charge of 4-H Family Living programs and Extension Homemakers Groups. She will be conducting various educational programs dealing with food and nutri-

pleted four years of work as Adams County Extension Home Economist. Prior to that she served as assistant Extension Home Economist for Franklin County from 1979 until 1984. She had earlier received her bachelor's degree in home economics from Indiana University of Pennsylvania and her master's degree from Ball State University, Muncie, Indiana.

In the Franklin County Cooperative Extension Office, she will be associated with Shearer, Senior County Agent Bill Reagan, Dairy Agent Phil Wagner, 4-H Agent Robert Kessler, and Family Living Aide Marty Brendle.

tion, family relationships, the enhancement of quality of life, various child-care and home-making skills, and special educational programs for the elderly and underprivileged.

Ms. Garris has recently com-

She can be contacted at 263-9222. She will be in the Franklin County Cooperative Extension office at 191 Franklin Farms Lane, Chambersburg.