

# Building Successful Breeding Hog, Sheep Programs

BY LISA RISSER

LEBANON — Daryl and Darren Grumbine conduct themselves with confidence and self-assurance that belies their youth. One might attribute this to a knowledge of their physical strength and abilities that comes from being football players and competitive power lifters. Or, it could come from being the sons of a successful businessman, and the money they earn working in their father's tractor-dealer store. Or, it could have been attained by being breeders of championship Yorkshire hogs. While all of these are contributing factors, their biggest successes have resulted from the hog program.

This spring, they showed purebred Yorkshires for the first time. They exhibited at the Pennsylvania Yorkshire-Duroc Invitational and came home with the reserve champion Yorkshire open gilt. At the Pennsylvania York-Duroc Summer Show & Sale they exhibited the reserve champion Yorkshire boar.

Daryl, 16, has been working with pigs since he was three years old. Darren, or Mootch as he is fondly called by family and friends, is 13 years old and began showing hogs eight years ago. The two began with the Berkshires their father raises and as 4-H'ers raised market hogs. Eventually one thing led to another, and they began breeding purebred Yorkshires in addition to their market animals. Currently the youths have eight Hampshire and Duroc brood sows, 12 Yorkshire brood sows, two Yorkshire herd boars, and several crossbred market swine.

The two work as a team with Daryl being the animal specialist and Mootch taking care of the feeding and field work. They grow soybeans and corn on the farm's 60 tillable acres. Up until now custom harvestors have taken the crops off the field, but this year Mootch plans to do the harvesting.

## Using artificial insemination

Three years ago Daryl became involved with artificial insemination, shortly after the family moved onto the farm where they housed their animals. "It was a new way to bring in new genetics without bringing in a herd boar," explained Daryl. Average herd boars cost about \$800 to \$900, according to Daryl, whereas semen runs about \$40 for two inseminations. The semen he purchases is from boars worth about \$5,000.

To learn how to inseminate his sows, Daryl read all that he could and watched videos from Stoney Creek Farms in Indiana. The first time he tried A.I., Daryl planned to breed two sows to a Yorkshire boar. He knew one took, but, because it was early morning and he was still sleepy, he wasn't exactly sure he and Mootch had inseminated the right second sow. One cycle later, they found out that all was well.

When Daryl and Mootch select a boar's semen, they look at the structure and characteristics of the sow. "If you have a tall, skinny sow, you want a boar with extreme width and bone to compensate," Daryl explained. "Hopefully her offspring will carry the boar's bones and thickness and keep the mother's size, milking ability, and litter size."

## Attaining marketable litters

Instead of attempting to breed a litter of show-quality pigs, the Grumbines try to get a litter that is



Daryl and Mootch have 12 Yorkshire brood sows. Here they check on one that farrowed recently.



Daryl and Mootch keep a herd of 45 breeding Dorsets and several market lambs.

marketable. Out of that litter, they may select a piglet or two to keep to show. "We try to get a uniform litter," said Mootch. "You want to keep all feeder pigs alive and growing at the same rate so you can sell them together."

Breeding consistency is important when looking at boars, "I look at the boar's offspring: are they going to look like him," said Daryl. He looks at the sire, dam, grand and granddam to see what appearance from each is passed on.

Once Daryl decides which boar to breed to the sow, he watches her for heat. "When I see her swell up, I order semen and within 24 hours I will have the semen. Within 36 hours, she'll go into standing heat."

Before inseminating the sow, the Grumbine brothers will run the sow in front of the boar pen. Hearing and smelling the boar causes the sow to stand still enough for her to be inseminated. After inseminating the animal, Daryl and Mootch wait 21 days until she cycles again to see if the sow is pregnant. If she comes in heat, they use the remaining semen. "About 80 percent catch on both inseminations," reported Daryl. "It depends on the time of year. For instance in the summer, a herd boar's sperm count is low. Temperature also hinders litter size."

## Developing a breeding program

When the Grumbines decided to start a purebred swine operation, at first they weren't sure which breed they wanted. "We wanted something other than Berkshires, which used to be the top breeding hog and was dwindling in popularity," commented Daryl.

"We wanted a breed that was popular around here and in Ohio," added Mootch. "You have to go to Indiana for a Berkshire show. Also, the Berkshires don't sell for the same kind of money a Yorkshire does. There are a lot more Yorkshire breeders today."

In the end, Yorkshire was the breed they settled on. In addition to its regional popularity, the Grumbines liked that it could be crossed with Hampshire or Duroc hogs to produce good feeder pigs.

Using money earned from selling market animals and winning show prizes, the young men purchased the champion and reserve open gilts at the 1985 Pennsylvania York-Duroc Summer State Show & Sale. "Not many people were bidding against us and we got the gilts for a bargain," reported Daryl. "They were right for us and right in the judge's eyes. I think a lot of buyers were looking for bred gilts too."

The following spring they added a boar to their small herd. They waited until this year to enter competition because "when we hit the show ring, we wanted to be contenders," said Daryl. "We didn't just want to go there, we wanted to win." Added Mootch, "We wanted to take something that would put our influence on the breed."

## Raising Dorset sheep

Shortly after beginning their 4-H careers, the Grumbines diversified their interests and began raising market lambs. As with the hogs, it developed into a breeding program. The youths selected Dorsets to raise. "They seemed to be an up and coming breed," said Daryl.

The Grumbines learned all about hogs from their father, but when it came to sheep, they turned to Ronnie Miller, the manager at Wey Farms.

Currently they have 45 head of breeding stock including two rams. They also have 15 market animals. "We usually keep eight ewe lambs per spring," said Daryl. Of these, they'll eventually sell most and put a few back into the flock.

When they started buying animals for their herd, their father,



The Grumbine farm in Lebanon consists of 70 acres of which 60 are tillable.



Daryl, right, is the animal specialist of the two brothers. Darren, or Mootch, is in charge of feeding and fieldwork.

Dennis, presented them with 12 ewes. The rest were purchased from project earnings. Instead of buying champions, they bought animals that possessed qualities

they liked. "Champions don't always pass on what they have," explained Daryl. "The whole livestock industry is a gamble. Some things work, some don't."

## Cornell Launches Clinic

ITHACA, N.Y. — More than 150 beef producers from New York and neighboring states will gather at Cornell University's Animal Science Teaching and Research Center at Harford, some 15 miles east of here, on Sept. 10 to learn the latest techniques for beef production.

The "Cow-Calf Clinic," the first of its kind ever sponsored by Cornell, will focus on the latest research findings in beef production, management recommendations, industry trends and marketing programs, according to William M. Greene, who is coordinating the day-long program. Greene is a beef specialist in the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences at Cornell.

### Topics include:

- Techniques for evaluating superior bulls used for breeding beef cattle.
- Use of ultrasonic scanners to measure fat thickness and other characteristics of live beef cattle.
- Results of cattle feeding trials conducted at Cornell.

Marketing options and programs available to beef producers in New York State.

The program also will feature a tour of hillside grazing areas near the center's beef research unit and demonstrations of live animal evaluation in terms of structure and type.

Greene said that New York beef producers had about 120,000 head of beef cows as of Jan. 1, a record since 1977. According to the New York Agricultural Statistics Service, Steuben County ranked first in the state with 6,100 beef cows, followed by Dutchess with 4,500 and Chautauqua with 4,300. Cattaraugus and St. Lawrence were tied with 3,600 head each.

Registration for the clinic, which is sponsored jointly by Cornell's Department of Animal Science and Cornell Cooperative Extension, will begin at 8 a.m. The program will start at 9 a.m. and conclude at 5 p.m.

For more information about the program, call Greene at (607) 255-2856.