

# 4-H Plants Westmoreland Seeds Of Success

GREENSBURG (Westmoreland Co.) — While many people think of 4-H as a development program for children of farm families, 4-H coordinators in Westmoreland County have designed projects based on the needs of all youth in this culturally and economically diverse area adjoining east Pittsburgh.

"The county has one of the largest rural communities in the state, but it is considered metropolitan because the majority of the population is concentrated in the industrial-based cities and suburbs," said Joann Logan, extension agent in charge of 4-H programs for Penn State Cooperative Extension in Westmoreland County.

"Steel production is the largest industry in the county, followed by agriculture," she said. "We have to design programs to suit a variety of kids, from those interested in traditional agriculture topics such as dairy and crop production to urban youth.

"About a quarter of the 4,000 members in our 4-H club come from urban public housing developments," Logan said. "Although we realize parent supervision can have a positive influence on children from these areas, experience shows the housing projects are a 'high risk' place for many kids because of intense peer pressure to abuse drugs and alcohol, or to exhibit other antisocial behavior."

Logan points out that the club's 1,000 members from farm backgrounds are not immune to these risks. But she says this group is less likely to be exposed to pressures experienced by those who live in the suburbs and cities.

The remaining 2,000 members are children from all backgrounds who participate in 4-H programs as part of their elementary or secondary school curriculum.

"Four years ago we had to advertise the availability of 4-H programs to school superintendents in urban and suburban areas," Logan said. "Now we

can't keep up with the demand." Logan says extension agents and 4-H adult leaders teach youngsters in kindergarten through second grade about the food chain. The students grow, harvest, and eat bean sprouts in the classroom.

For older kids, the extension office provides an elementary course in embryology. Egg incubators are brought into the classroom and students learn about basic cell division and poultry production.

Logan said urban adolescents are attracted to 4-H projects they can complete at home, such as raising rabbits. "Three years ago

we designed a program where teen-agers could use a limited space to learn the responsibilities involved with raising an animal," she said.

"During 1989, we had 35 members who took home a baby rabbit and raised it to maturity. That number almost tripled to 95 in 1990, and last year we had more than 300 members raising rabbits at home.

"Although the kids become attached to their animals as they would a pet, we stress the management aspect of raising the animals. The rabbits must be properly fed and monitored for disease because the ultimate goal is to market them

for their fur and meat." During the program's final phase, Logan said members enter their animals in a competition. Professional judges award ribbons and cash prizes to those with the healthiest rabbits of each breed.

"Some contestants go as far as grooming their rabbits to try to get the judge's attention," she said.

Logan said that interest sparked by this program has led many urban youth to join Westmoreland County's 4-H veterinary science club. "The club has 60 members age 12 and up, and all the kids in this group are from city and suburb neighborhoods," she said.

## Drought Forces South Africa To Import U.S. Corn

WASHINGTON, D.C. — In March, a team of South African grain and livestock industry officials visited the U.S. Feed Grains Council to express their interest in purchasing U.S. corn for human

consumption. South Africa has not been a major importer of corn since 1984. However, the worst drought of the century has ravaged South Africa's 1991/1992 grain production by 50 percent, and 11 million metric tons (mmt) of imports will be required over the next year to prevent widespread malnutrition.

The 1991/1992 corn crop, expected to be the lowest since World War II, is estimated at 102 million bushels (mbu), a tremend-

ous drop from last year's 327 mbu crop.

Marketing year 1991/1992 corn import needs are estimated at 181 mbu, compared to last year's corn imports of 14.8 mbu. In May, Council staff went to South Africa to answer quality questions and to evaluate South Africa as a long-term customer.

In June, South Africa's head grain trader came to the United States to meet with the Council to discuss grain purchases.

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