

Hard Work, Goal Setting Are Priorities

Persistence Nets Championships For Reiffs

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— It isn't luck that allows Lyndon and Lisa Reiff consistently to win top honors for their sheep in county and state competitions.

"It's hard work and a priority in our lives," said Lyndon, who estimates that he and his sister spend three hours every day exercising and feeding their sheep.

"For five years, we were at the bottom — and I mean the bottom in every competition," he said.

Through membership in the 4-H club and by talking with other sheep owners, the Reiffs learned what to look for when purchasing a sheep and how to improve it through nutrition and exercise.

The Reiffs are adamant in their praise of Elvin Yeagley, a 4-H leader. "If it wasn't for him, we'd never be where we are today," he said. "The 4-H Club is really geared to help first-year members learn to pick out a good lamb and feed it well."

Those who visit the Reiffs two-acre farmette in the wooded fringes of Strasburg may suspect that the Reiffs sheep are a bit pampered in comparison with most sheep raised in the county. The Reiffs' sheep have their own playground equipment. There's a huge wooden ramp on which the sheep play King of the Mountain. Hurdles are placed sporadically in the fenced off area for the sheep to jump and play.

The play equipment isn't available merely to entertain the sheep. The purpose is to encourage the sheep to run and jump, which develops firmness and muscle.

The sheep are not fed like most sheep. Instead, they are led from their pen to a garage where the sheep must stand in an upright position to eat their meals. Standing,

according to Lyndon, stretches the hind muscles and strengthens them — a positive quality in competition.

The sheep are fed individually on a special diet developed by a nutritionist. "It's top of the line nutrition," Lyndon said. "Our nutritionist is a former veterinarian who studied sheep and nutrition — and that has really helped us."

Now that the Reiffs have a good idea of the nutrition required, Lloyd, the siblings' father, often figures out the minerals required. The sheep are fed more protein during show times and topdressed with corn.

"Because we feed them individually, we know exactly how much each sheep is eating. That way a bigger sheep can't push a smaller sheep away from the food," Lyndon said.

Seven years ago, Lyndon purchased his first sheep, a Dorset named Hamilton. Lyndon built a doghouse for him that he named Hamilton Place.

"I picked him out because he was cute," Lyndon said. Surprisingly Hamilton was named reserve champion — pure coincidence, according to Lyndon, "because after that, I went through five years of being on the bottom."

He watched as two sisters from New Holland consistently won top awards for their sheep. As the Reiffs' sheep began to do better, Lyndon and Lisa set a goal: to beat the two girls from New Holland."

With their sheep, the Reiffs accomplished their goal of beating the two sisters in competition. Now, the Reiffs find that many sheep exhibitors have set a goal to beat them.

"The competition is good even if it gets a bit rough at times," Lyndon said. "Nobody goes to a show to lose. Some (exhibitors) don't



The Reiff family in Strasburg includes Lisa and Lyndon and parents, Lloyd and Laura. Another son, Lloyd was not available for pictures.



Lisa Reiff watches the sheep as they jump over the hurdles placed intermittently in the area fenced off for the sheep.



Lyndon said that having the sheep feed in this position builds muscle in their hindquarters. Feeding them individually also allows them to make sure each one gets an adequate portion of the nutritionally balanced feed.

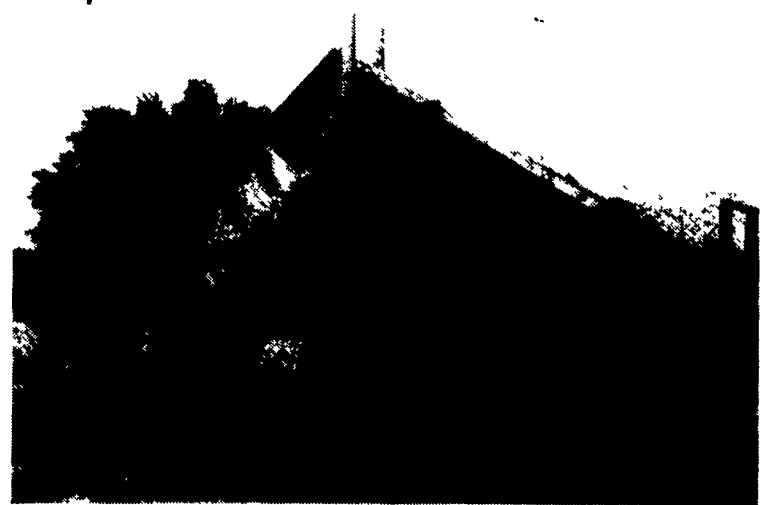
like that we win so often. Some accuse us of feeding the sheep steroids, but that isn't true. Anyone can do well if they want to. It's a matter of priority. Lisa and I put aside sports and everything to concentrate on sheep. Lots of kids who show sheep are also into a lot of other things, but we aren't. Raising quality sheep is what Lisa and I choose to do and that requires hours of work each day, not just at show time."

A large cupboard overflowing with trophies and ribbons attest to the fact that the Reiffs are successful with sheep. Each year, they put away the trophies from the previous year. The 1991 trophies include a banner for showing the Pennsylvania Farm Show reserve champion.

"That was a major surprise," Lisa said. One that has set a new goal for Lyndon, who is now determined to win the Pennsylvania grand champion trophy.

"I realize that's the goal of a lot of others who got some good ones (sheep) too," Lyndon said. "In a way it gets harder and harder to win because other competitors are improving their sheep also."

Each time the Reiffs attend a show, they take turns choosing the sheep from the flock that they want to show. Because judges have different viewpoints on what makes the best sheep, the choosing isn't



The sheep like to play King of the Mountain on this ramp.

easy. "Generally, we try to pick out four completely different sheep so that we have at least one the judge will like," Lyndon said.

Lisa tends to pick out an average sheep that is considered a complete package. Lyndon prefers a heavy muscled sheep with a big front end.

The Reiffs estimate that they enter shows every other week during fair season. In addition to local fairs, they like the competition of the big shows such as the Pennsylvania Farm Show, Keystone, and the Jack Pot.

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Homestead
Notes