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Berks 4-H'ers Earn Honors At Banquet

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LEESPORT (Berks Co.) — Discussion about the American family reached a fever pitch in the weeks before the presidential election. But family values are something the farm community knows a lot about.

Families involved in 4-H knew all along that the organization is perfect for forging those things so hallowedly referred to as "family values."

Just ask the Hunter family of Oley, all of whom, in an 11-year span of time, helped their four children raise livestock for various 4-H projects.

The Hunters were one of more than two dozen families at the Berks County 4-H recognition banquet held recently in the 4-H Community Center.

Debbie Dietrich, the extension agent for 4-H livestock and dairy, noted that Berks has the largest 4-H enrollment in the southeast region of the state.

The Hunter children still at home, Paula, 17, and Leon Jr., 14, won honors that night. Paula, as well, was master of ceremonies. Her sister, Valerie, who attends Cornell University, was one of two top 4-H'ers named by the Reading Fair agricultural committee. (The other honoree was Amy Eshelman of Shillington.)

Though father, Leon, was absent, as was Paula's twin, Christine, both also are heavily involved in 4-H, said their mother, Pat.

It all started when Valerie came

home one day and wanted to get a swine so that she could be in 4-H, Pat said. They only had horses then on their 20-acre farm near Breezy Corners.

But they went ahead and got Valerie a pig.

"My father came from a farm," Pat said. "So I was familiar with some of the animals." But Leon Sr., she said, was from New Jersey

and had "no inkling at all" how to raise livestock.

"We just fed it, and it ate, and we fed it again," she said. When roundup time came, the pig weighed 280 pounds. Though the judge was impressed, he advised the Hunters to reduce their feeding of the animal. The purchase of a second animal came soon after, and Valerie named the two pigs

Charlotte and Wilbur (after characters in "Charlotte's Web.")

"Then we found out 'Charlotte' was a boy and named him Chester," Pat said, laughing.

Needless to say, she and the rest of the family got a crash course in swine raising that year. Of course, going to fairs and meeting other people showing their animals

taught the Hunters more than any book.

"That's the one thing about 4-H; when you're in a club the leaders and older kids help the younger ones," she said. Both she and her husband became involved as 4-H leaders.

After two years of raising pigs, Paula decided to check out sheep.

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International supreme champion HighTower with friends, from left, John Fought, detailer; Steve Taylor, fitter and showman; Wes Linesand, judge; Steve George, judge; Becky Wolf; and Mark Chapman, judge.

HighTower International Supreme

LOUISVILLE, Ky. — For the first time, a Pennsylvania-bred entry was named supreme champion at the North American International Livestock Exposition (NAILE) held recently in Louisville, Ky.

The honor went to a yearling Suffolk ewe named HighTower from Lye Lee Farms and owned by Dr. and Mrs. Gerald Clair and daughter Amy, State College. Enroute to the honor over all breeds, HighTower was named senior champion and national champion Suffolk ewe.

HighTower is the first supreme champion and the first grand champion Suffolk at NAILE from Pennsylvania. Earlier in the year, HighTower was the senior and grand champion at both the National Junior Suffolk Show in Kalamazoo, Mich., and the Keystone International Livestock Exposition in Harrisburg.

Report Validates Reasons For Testing Wells To Improve Water Quality

Editor's Note: A report was recently issued by the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Resources that indicates many wells in the state may be contaminated with high amounts of nitrates. Some of the results of that report are listed here. This is the first in a series on the importance of testing well water and how to manage water for herd, farm, and family life.

ANDY ANDREWS
Lancaster Farming Staff

*Water, water everywhere
and not a drop to drink.*
— Anonymous

BERNVILLE (Berks Co.) — For dairyman Calvin Zerbe, the nightmare began after returning from an afternoon drive on a hazy Sunday August afternoon.

A favorite cow, a 3-year-old,

was lying dead in the field.

A few months earlier, Zerbe remembered, calves on milk replacer began to die. The cows refused to drink the water. Their digestive systems were simply shutting down.

What was causing these problems? he wondered. Some disease? Zerbe called a veterinarian. The vet's suggestion? Move the calves from the barn into hutches

and administer antibiotics. But it didn't work. More began to die.

With all other possibilities ruled out, Zerbe considered another. Could it be something in the water?

Water contaminated

After the well tests came back, they confirmed the worst — the water was highly contaminated. "We had just about everything," said Zerbe. "High nitrates, coli-

form bacteria . . . They said not to do anything with it — not wash clothes or anything."

Zerbe said the water problems perplexed him for the longest time. When a family member came down with a flu-like illness, could that have been the result of drinking the contaminated water? And how to measure how much money was lost, in downed calves, in sick time, if the water was contaminated?

Even though it cost more than \$2,000 for the new well, Zerbe went ahead and had one drilled. He said it came to the point "where I figured now we're losing more money than what it's costing to get a well, so we got it done, anyway," he said.

He admitted later that, after redrilling a new well and putting in a chlorination system, he poured himself a cup of coffee. He tasted it, and admitted that "it didn't taste right."

"My wife said that I was so used to the bad-tasting water that I didn't know what good water

Lancaster Extension Offers Dairy Housing Tips

VERNON ACHENBACH JR.
Lancaster Farming Staff

LANCASTER (Lancaster Co.) — Don't consider cost right away in considering the construction of dairy housing, advised Dan McFarland, Penn State University multi-county extension engineer, during a recent dairy housing meeting held in Lancaster.

On Tuesday, during an informal-atmosphere meeting in a basement room of the Lancaster Farm and Home Center, McFarland discussed the variety of housing designs in use, their successes,

some considerations which he said should be taken into account, and the reasons for some of the choices.

But, in citing his priority list for which element should be considered first in deciding what to build and who to get to build it, quality was the first priority he recommended, not cost.

"Go see everything you can. Try to open up to new ideas to see what others are building. Tour, tour, tour," he said.

McFarland gave the advice during a free, several-hour talk spon-

sored by the extension service. Attending were about two dozen county dairy people. The meeting was held under an informal atmosphere, allowing for questions at any time.

McFarland has been working in the area for several years and has toured most of the major and unique structures in the state.

His tracking of animal housing exceeds commercial offerings and includes much of what research and farmer experience has discovered over the years.

According to the engineer —

who is headquartered out of the York County office, but is a regular traveler through several south central counties — the reason cost can not be the first priority is because it speaks to nothing about what type of building and structures are possible or needed in order to create a smoothly operating, profitable system.

Existing buildings on the property, the market served, labor restrictions, daily operational flow, cow comfort, prevailing winds, directional and seasonal exposure

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