

National Goat Representative Promotes Industry

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Lancaster Farming Staff
CHALFONT (Bucks Co.) —

Seventeen-year-old Paul Plummer is the National Goat Representative. Paul considers himself a natural spokesperson for the industry because he grew up with goats.

He said, "My family has raised them for 23 years. When I was 8 years old, I started showing goats, and by the time I was 11, I was showing semiprofessionally."

Paul and his parents, Dr. John and Maxine Plummer, and his sister, Amy, have 25 to 30 Toggenburg goats that they show across the U.S.

"Mom, Amy, and I leave the day school is over and return about two days before it begins again," Paul said. His dad, who teaches at Delaware Valley College, remains at home to feed the remaining goat herd and Jersey calves, but will often join the family for weekend shows.

According to Paul, the Toggenburg breed are medium-sized and docile tempered. The breed originated in the Swiss Alps in an area called Toggenburg. The markings of purebred Toggenburgs may be any shade of brown with white on the face, around the legs, and in the diaper area. Toggenburgs have erect ears and look similar to deer.

Paul's parents became interested in raising goats in a round about way. When they first purchased their Chalfont farm, it was zoned agriculture. The real estate agent suggested that the Plummers immediately buy at least one farm animal to insure that the property remain zoned for agriculture.

"I wanted to buy a horse," Mrs. Plummer said, "but we didn't have much time, so we quickly purchased a goat."

The Plummers planned to sell the goat as soon as they purchased a horse.

Instead, they fell in love with the playful antics of the goat and continued to purchase more. "We never did buy a horse," Mrs. Plummer said.

The Plummers also raise Jersey calves, which are bottle-fed goat's milk.

"We think calves do better on goat's milk," Paul said. "They are

larger and tend to have healthier hair coats than calves fed in other ways."

Before Paul took over national responsibilities for the goat industry, he was named Pennsylvania Goat Representative. During the American Goat Association pageant held in Massachusetts, he competed with representatives from other states to achieve the national title. The competition included a 15-minute oral speech, an impromptu questioning session, and a personal interview with judges.

"I want to do my part to represent the goat industry. The public has many misconceptions about goats that I want to correct," Paul said.

One particular pet peeve of his is the commonly held belief that goats eat tin cans.

"They don't," he said.

Paul plans a career in vet research. Already he has gained experience in scientific research. For the past five years, his continuation of a science fair project has dealt with goat colostrum and a virus often transmitted to the offspring. Currently, heat treatment will kill the virus, but it also kills the antibodies in the colostrum. Paul's project examines other methods of solving the problem. His project has enabled him to advance to the International Science and Engineering Fair. Three years ago, Paul placed third in medicine and health, and for the past two years, in the zoology division.

Paul claims that he has no other choice than to become a scientist.

"I always tell people that both my mother and father are scientists so I was bred to be a scientist," he joked.

Paul, his sister, and mother show mostly in a tri-state area, but they travel to many other states. Sometimes this means shipping the goats by air.

"In the eastern U.S., there may be more goats, but the ratio of people to goats, I would say, is similar throughout the area," Paul said.

In the East, competitive breeds include Nubian, Alpine, and Toggenburg. Nubians are more popular in the West.



The Plummer family raise about 30 Toggenburg goats that they show across the U.S. In front are Amy and Paul with their parents, Dr. John and Maxine Plummer.

When choosing a breed, Paul said, a person should be within driving distance of a buck.

The Plummers breed goats about 50 percent of the time with AI services and the other times with their own bucks.

Each year the ADGA indexes all animals, appraises and classifies milk records. In choosing the stud, the Plummers analyze their herd for what they believe is the biggest concern and look for that trait in a buck.

"At shows, we search for bucks with genetics that we would like to have in our own herd," he said.

The Plummers market their own goats.

In showing, Paul shows the herd classified as American Toggenburgs and his sister shows the purebreds.

Generally, the two herds appear similar. The difference, according to Paul, is that purebreds have records that may be traced to the Swiss Alps. The American herd that Paul raises can be traced for at least 24 generations but not to the Swiss Alps.

"There is a push within the Dairy Goat Association to convert American Toggenburgs after five generations to Purebred Toggenburgs," Paul said.

While the brother and sister compete against each other in the

show ring, Paul said, "We function as a herd group. Amy tends to be a better showman and I, a better fitter. The premium money goes back into the show circuit."

Paul is a senior at Central Bucks West High School. After high school graduation, Paul plans to obtain an official goat judging license. Three tiers of license are available according to how applicants score on written and oral exams. The first level is apprentice, the second is senior, and the third advanced.

After he becomes a vet scientist, Paul expects to stay affiliated with the industry by judging show animals.

Feeding Minds For Tomorrow

HARRISBURG (Dauphin Co.) — Margaret A. Wolff, wife of the Pennsylvania Secretary of Agriculture Boyd Wolff, accepted the first contribution to the Pennsylvania Foundation for Better Living's 1993 fund-raising drive. PA FBL works to educate the general public about the importance of the food and fiber system and the role of agriculture in their daily lives.

At a press conference held during Farm Show week, the Pennsylvania Dairymen's Association

presented a check for \$2,500 to Mrs. Wolff supporting the mission of the foundation.

In 1992 the foundation hosted a four-day teachers' workshop for 45 teachers to increase the understanding of the relationship between agriculture and the consumer and the economy. This summer two workshops are planned to accommodate 100 elementary teachers.

Christine Jacobs, a kindergarten teacher and a graduate of last sum-

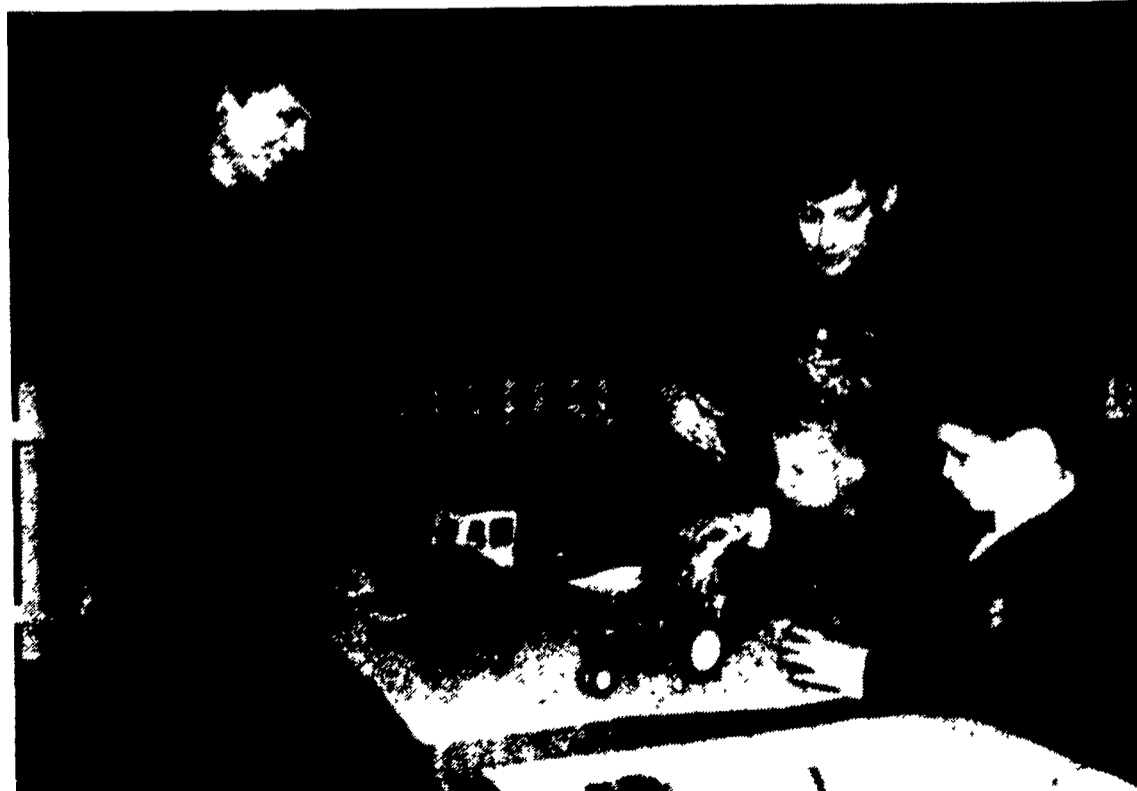
mer's workshop explained how she incorporates the information she learned into her regular curriculum. She also has shared her knowledge and teaching materials with other teachers in her school.

Following the press conference Mrs. Jacobs and her students toured the Farm Show.

Besides the teachers' workshop, PA FBL is establishing a speakers' bureau and provides teaching materials and follow-up support for teachers.



As both Pennsylvania and National Goat Representative, Paul Plummer wants to do his part in clearing up many misconceptions that people have about goats. Representative duties require Paul to attend numerous public functions as the spokesperson for the industry and to attend as many goat shows as possible across the U.S.



At left, Beth Heath Moore, executive director for the Pennsylvania Foundation for Better Living, and Christine Jacobs, teacher, encourage creative, hands-on activities that teach children about the value of agriculture. Both women spoke at the press conference held at the Pennsylvania Farm Show Complex.