

Kids' KOrner

Cow Goes To School

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EAST PETERSBURG (Lancaster Co.)—Like most of the students at East Petersburg Elementary School, Vanna was well scrubbed and every hair was in place when she stepped inside the classroom door.

She was well behaved as she stood patiently in the spot that the teacher indicated. She did not kick or complain when students smirked, giggled, and held their noses.

A stunning red and white cow, Vanna seemed confident that the students who petted, patted, and rubbed her nose were quite good friends.

Although Vanna had often visited nursing homes, shopping malls, and playgrounds, this was her first actual visit inside the classroom.

To be honest, Vanna seemed better behaved than some of her classmates.

True, Vanna was allowed to

munch on some food, while her classmates waited for lunch to be served in the cafeteria. She was allowed to stand while the other students were told to sit down, but Vanna was very cooperative during her first day at school.

Her calf, Sexy, that accompanied her, was not as well behaved.

Sexy lifted her tail and produced a puddle of water much to the chagrin of the teacher. The students gasped and shrieked. Some held their noses.

Vanna and Sexy came to school to help children understand all the work that goes into making good-tasting milk for them.

Ordinarily, adults teach Ag in the Classroom sessions. But, on this day, 11-year-old Denise Bollinger, taught the students about cows.

"I'm here to tell you about cows. Yeah, they're big," she said in chatty kid lingo. "They grow to be about 100 feet or higher."

Maybe Denise exaggerated the size of the cow a bit, but she knows



A cold rain forced Vanna the Cow and her calf Sexy to seek shelter inside the classroom at East Petersburg Elementary School. From left are Ruby, Darryl, and Denise Bollinger.

what she is talking about when it comes to milking and showing cows.

Denise, the daughter of Darryl and Ruby Bollinger of Manheim, helps every day on her parents' dairy farm. She told how she milks, feeds, and keeps record of

the cows.

She told about taking cows to shows.

"Sure you miss school, but it's a lot of work," she said. "Every day, you've got to wash, feed, and clip them."

She showed the students the many cleaning supplies to keep cows looking their shimmering best. Hair spray is used to make their hair stand just right and hoof polish or shoe polish is used on their feet, but then you got to get that stuff out, she said.

For that, she uses Undress or oil.

The halters need to be shined with mineral oil.

"When you put the halter on, hold the animal tight. Train them to hold their heads up and tell them to behave, she said.

"To get the most control of an animal, walk it backwards," she said.

She explained the necessity of registration and pedigree papers. "A cow is given an ear tag, ear-rings for life, she said.

Cows, she said, do get sick. A vet is a doctor for animals. But medicine doesn't take care of everything. One of Denise's cows had an allergic reaction to medication and got hives all over it.

Denise explained the four stomachs of a cow, how they chew their cud and it comes back up into another stomach.

"You feed cows hay or silage, but cows will eat anything, even

ropes if you don't watch out," she said.

Denise got some help from her mother when she showed an automatic milker and how it is hooked up. She told of the need to wash a cow with iodine to kill bacteria and germs.

"I'm so lucky, I get to feed the calves," said Denise as she held up the bottle used to feed the calves.

"Every cow must be fed a balanced diet, just like you," Denise said.

She talked about the feed that is fed to the cows — a mixture of oats, corn, and molasses. Vitamins, fiber, protein, and salt are added.

"It tastes good. I tasted it," Denise assured the students.

Her father showed the students a bucket of feed from which Vanna nibbled.

Each of the students petted Vanna and her calf and admired her glossy coat.

While the students needed to spend a whole day at school, Vanna did not.

She nonchalantly chewed her cud as Denise's dad led her through the doorway.

"It's the first time a cow was actually in the classroom," Denise reported with pride.

Now, Denise can add that accomplishment to the record book that she keeps on Vanna, that also won two blue ribbons and some other placings at local fairs.



Vanna the Cow stands patiently while students petted, patted, and rubbed her.



Students at East Petersburg Elementary School wait impatiently for a turn to pet Vanna the Cow and her calf, Sexy.



Whenever strangers visit the school, they must wear a badge to prove that they have been cleared by security. So when Vanna the Cow visited the school, she naturally wore a hat to prove she was cleared by security.

