

Berks Sheep Family Heads For The Farm Show

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Berks Co. Correspondent
LENHARTSVILLE (Berks Co.) — Sheep figure prominently in the lives of the Bowman family here.

From the more than 60 head of Dorset and Corriedales on their 25 acres along Old 22 to the numerous stuffed and wood sheep toys placed throughout their home, it's obvious sheep farming is a way of life.

Mother Nancy, a third-grade teacher at Kutztown Elementary School, laughingly describes the family's life as "work, fun and chaos."

Along with attending all the shows in Berks County, the Bowmans look forward each year to participating in the Pennsylvania Farm Show.

It was father, Roger, an eighth

grade science teacher at Fleetwood Junior High School, who got the family involved many years ago when he bought his first head of commercial sheep.

Stephanie, 16, can say matter-of-factly: "I've been around sheep all of my life."

Once Stephanie showed interest, the family purchased some purebred Dorsets for her to breed and raise.

Maybe it is the way the sheep become snowy white after they are shorn that endeared this breed the Stephanie and her brother Michael, 18, as they began to get involved in 4-H and started winning prizes.

"(The Dorsets) also have good mothering instincts," Stephanie said.

Almost every year since Stephanie has been involved with 4-H

sheep projects, she has won fitting and showmanship awards and Blue Form awards as she gained experience.

"As I got older I've gotten heavier competition and more experience," she said about her progress.

Right up there as well, Michael has consistently captured showmanship awards around the county. In 1993, he won the 4-H senior showmanship prize.

As the Bowmans' sheep get better, they hope to capture more market prizes, and they seem to be on their way.

Last year, Stephanie won the reserve champion market lamb at the Reading Fair, for which she received \$385.

"We're still celebrating," said Nancy. "It took a week for (the winning of) that award to sink in."

Winning awards is not the only pursuit of Stephanie and Michael as they engage in their sheep careers. They also are involved in leading the troops.

Michael is the president of the Kutztown FFA, and Stephanie is vice president. Both attend Kutztown High School and both are active in the Berks County 4-H Sheep and Lamb Club.

In addition, Stephanie, who also is the Berks County Wool queen, following the footsteps of her good friend, Amy Eshelman of Shillington, who was the Berks County Wool Queen for two years and also state wool queen.

Stephanie hopes to copy her friend once again and eventually capture the state wool queen title. But that competition is about a

year away.

As wool queen, Stephanie will be expected to do at least three wool promotions in county schools this year.

Projects using wool are nothing new to Stephanie, because she is also involved in clothing and textiles in Fleetwood Community 4-H

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Taking time out from farm chores and school activities, Stephanie Bowman spins some yarn from raw wool while her family looks on: mother Nancy; brother Michael and father Roger.



Michael holds one of the award-winning ewes from their flock.

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