

Jennifer Flinchbaugh Develops Show String

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York Co. Correspondent

YORK (York Co.) — As a six-year veteran sheep exhibitor, Jennifer Flinchbaugh has developed a philosophy about the size of a show string.

"It is better to show a couple good ones than a lot of poorer ones," figures this 12-year-old shepherd.

Jen's entries for the 1994 Farm Show open a new show year, on the basis of an extremely successful one for her at local, regional and national sheep shows. It was a year that spanned the excitement of a reserve breed champion on her first trip to the North American International Livestock Exposition in Kentucky and a heart-break when her favorite ewe died an untimely death in a freak accident.

At the age of 12, Jennifer Flinchbaugh has amassed an impressive array of show ribbons, plaques, plates, and awards through the half-dozen years she has been parading lambs across

the tanbark. With her parents, Ed and Lou Ann Keeny, Jennifer has helped to truck, wash, trim, halter-break and show sheep from the family's Walnut Lane Farm, York R8, since she was six.

Last year's Farm Show competition earned Jen the reserve champion honors in the market lamb lightweight division. A personal goal of hers is to someday exhibit the champion overall market lamb in the highly-competitive show of some 200 entries, with only a single entry allowed per exhibitor.

"It takes a very, very, very good sheep to do that," emphasizes this goal-oriented exhibitor. Cross-breeds, she adds, usually make better market class entries than pure-breeds.

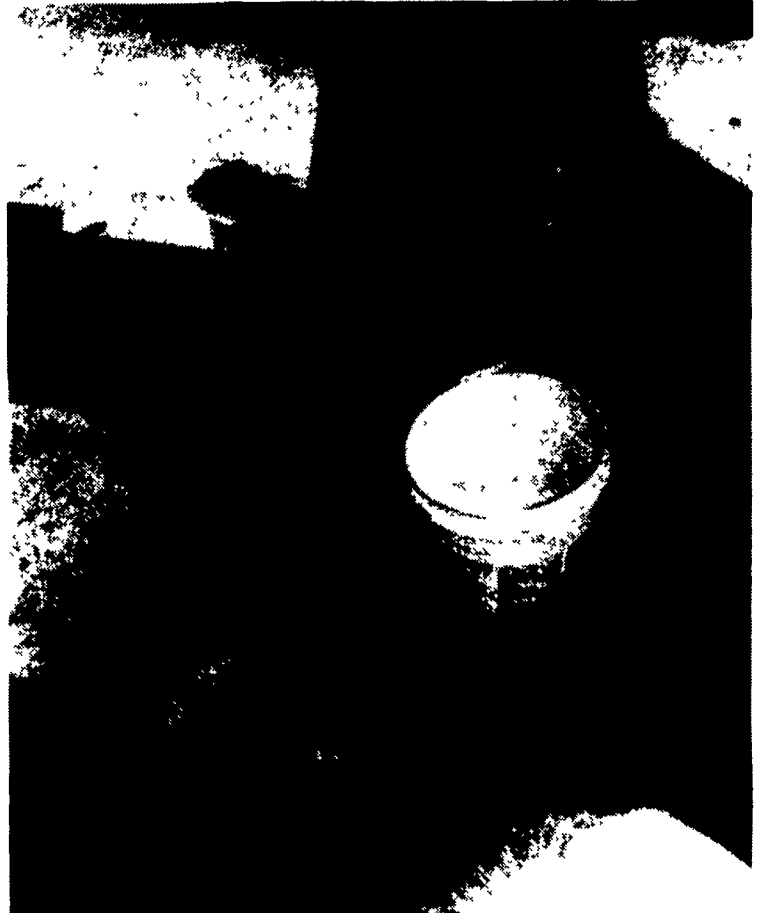
From her present flock of about 50 animals, she captured numerous champion and reserve awards in both breeding and market lamb classes at summer and fall shows throughout the region. Jen wrapped up the show year in November by snagging reserve champion

Southdown ewe honors at the noted Louisville international show, taking fifth in the breed's futurity class and copping a third place showmanship award from more than 20 junior exhibitors of all ages.

Wilma, her since-retired winning ewe, had earlier earned breed and supreme honors during the fall Eastern National show at Timonium, Maryland and junior show breed honors at the Keystone International Livestock Exposition in Harrisburg. She also exhibited the champion Hampshire ram at both shows and took the champion natural colored ewe honors at Eastern National and the Maryland State Fair.

Early on, her parents encouraged Jen to work with various breeds to decide which she liked the best. She is now narrowing her breeding focus to concentrate primarily on her favorites, the Southdowns.

"I like their calm temperament," Jen says of the gentleness of her Southdowns, and adds jokingly, "and they can get fat on



It's feeding time for Jennifer Flinchbaugh's pigs. Four of her Yorkshire breeding animals and one market pig are entered for Farm Show competition.

air." That efficiency of feed conversion is especially important to Jen, since she is responsible for managing both the income and expenses of her livestock enterprises.

In fact, Jen estimates that she can grow out her Southdown lambs on half the feed of the somewhat larger Hampshires. She does plan, however, to maintain a group of about 15 Hamps within her flock for show and market animal purposes.

Three years ago, this shepherd decided she would like to diversify a bit and acquired a few 4-H project show pigs.

"My grandpa and my dad had

pigs in FFA," explains Jen as one of her reasons for getting into the pig breeding and showing business. She now has about a dozen, four of them market animals. Because of her relatively small number of breeding pigs, Jen and her parents are contemplating use of artificial insemination for her gilts and sows in the future, as more practical and safe than housing a boar hog.

"I chose Yorkshires partly because that's the breed my grandfather had and because they have good temperament and good mothering abilities," she explains of her selection process.

She will show the one-per-exhibitor allowed in Farm Show market and sale competition as well as a few breeding class entries. During a previous Farm Show sale, Jen found herself in possession of the hats of two potential buyers. She went into the sale ring wearing one — with her pig wearing the other. The advertising effort paid off, earning Jen a higher-than-average, per-pound sale price.

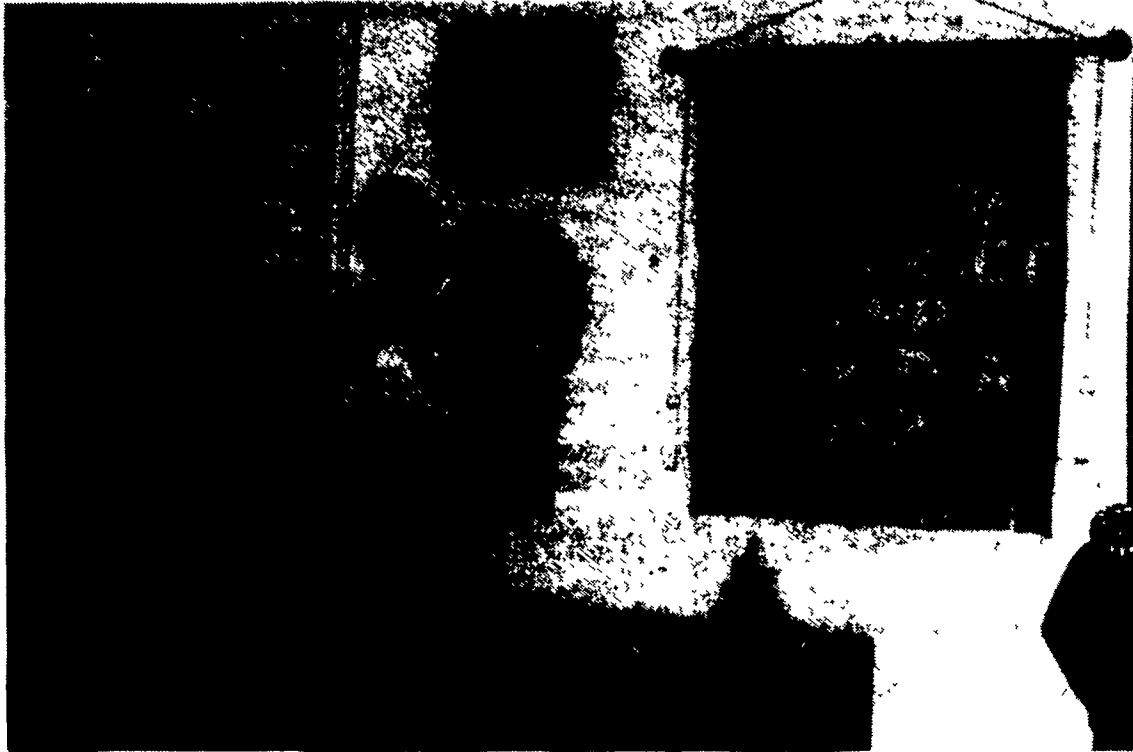
A year ago, Jen took out a Youth Loan through the Farmers Home Administration in order to rework some of the farm's facilities for her livestock. She's already repaid half the loan, returning virtually all of her pig income into paying off the debt. Her goal is to be debt-free in another year.

Having to write checks from her own checking account for loan payments has been a learning experience for Jen, her mother Lou Ann says. She recounts a recent observation of Jen's that it is much more fun to be a lender than to be a borrower.

Jen is a seventh-grade student at Dallsatown Middle School, where she plays violin in the school orchestra. A member of the county's 4-H lamp and pig clubs, she practices with the livestock judging team and hopes to qualify for the junior team when she is old enough.

With an eye toward her future, Jen plans to pursue a career as a large animal veterinarian. Though college is several years away, she's already thinking about Kansas State, where her uncle is on the university staff, or perhaps remaining a bit closer to home at Penn State.

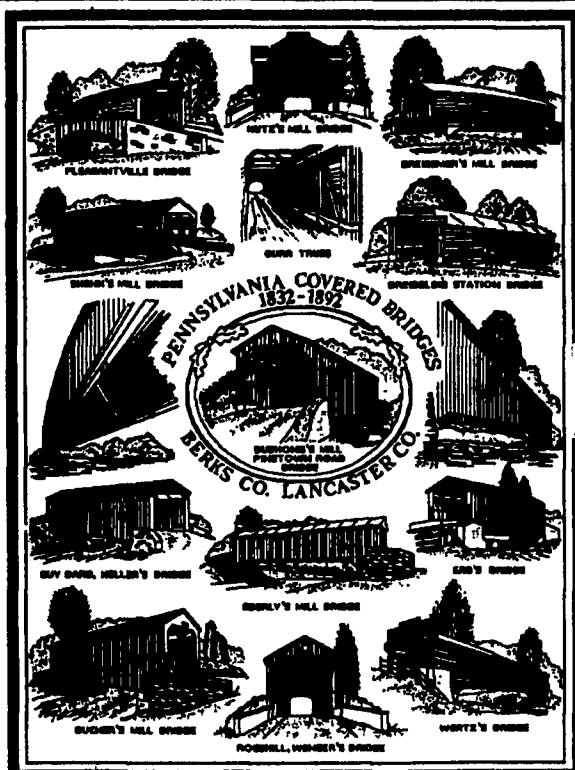
For now, caring for her growing number of animals takes about 45 minutes each day, longer on weekends when pens and barns get added cleanout time. Lambing time for the family's 45-head flock will soon get under way; Jen helps at lambing whenever an extra pair of hands is needed. Three bred nanny goats, kept primarily as pets, and two riding horses round out the barnyard population at Walnut Lane Farm.



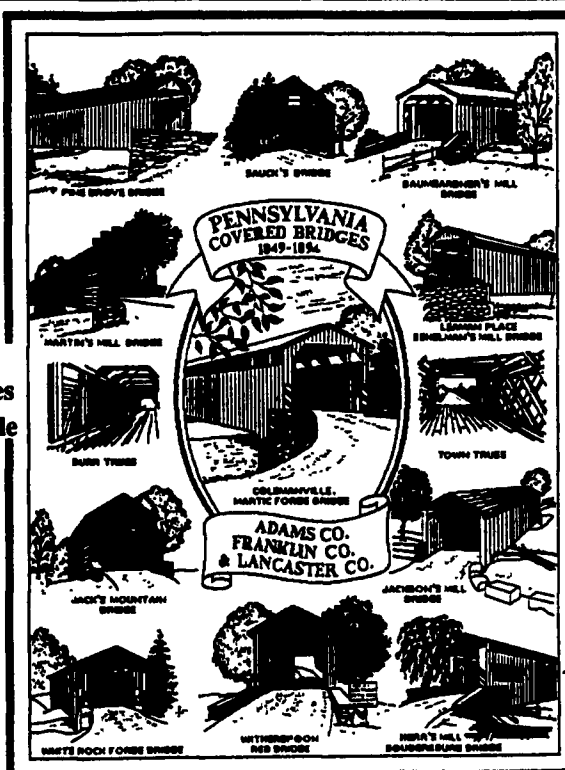
Ribbons, plaques and banners from the North American International Livestock Exposition and the York Fair are among the numerous awards won through 1993 by Jennifer Flinchbaugh with her Southdown, Hampshire and natural colored sheep showstring.

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