

Kid's KOrner

Quack, Peep, Gobble, Cock-A-Doddle-Do

LOU ANN GOOD

Lancaster Farming Staff CREAMERY (Montgomery Co.) — Incessant squawking, gentle peeping, quacking, and an occasional cock-a-doddle-doo wafted over the 4-H Montgomery County 4-H Fairgrounds recently.

The sounds came from the tent where Birds of a Feather 4-H'ers assembled to show off their feathered friends.



Nicholas Quinto demonstrates the proper way to hold a duck.



Gavin Bechtle spreads the wing of his chicken for judges to examine.



If it doesn't say quack, peep, gobble, or cock-a-doddle-doo, it doesn't belong to the Poultry Club. That's the message 4-H members wore on their T-shirts.

There were the ordinary ducks and hens and the not-so-ordinary birds such as Bantams, Silkie Hens, Blue Splas Cockin, Yellow Buff Cockin, and Polish Hens.

Some were tiny and some were quite large but all needed to be held in the proper one-hand hold for judging.

The contestants were judged on their calm manner of working with the birds. At the proper time, the contestants needed to run their hands through the feathers, spread



Members of Birds of a Feather Club compete for showmanship honors during competition at the Montgomery County 4-H Fair.

the wings, and turn the bird around.

Points were deducted if the showman turned the bird in an awkward position or if, when pos-

ing the bird, the showman did not step back for the judges to have a closer look.

4-H'ers become quite attached to their birds when raising them for

a project. Many have cages inside their homes for the birds or keep them outside.

It's a project that doesn't take up a lot of room and yet teaches the owner responsibility.

Top winners at the 4-H Montgomery Fair were Jackie Wentzel, 16; Dee Williams, 18; Nicholas Quinto, 15; and Gavin Bechtle, 11.

Rabbit 4-H Clubs Prepare For Farm Show Auction

LOU ANN GOOD

Lancaster Farming Staff CREAMERY (Montgomery Co.) — Rabbit growers are excited. For the first time ever, their meat rabbits will go over the auction block at the Pennsylvania Farm Show.

That means they need to prepare now, according to Peg Hailey, who is the chairperson for the Farm Show Rabbit department.

The youth who raise rabbits put a lot of effort into it and receive little recognition. The Pennsylvania State Rabbit Breeders have been petitioning the Farm Show Commission to include the rabbit meat pens in the Junior Livestock

Auction. But officials were reluctant to include the rabbits, not because they have anything against rabbits, but because time does not permit any additions.

This year, the rabbits will be auctioned not at the closing day auction but at the Saturday night auction.

The rules for the youth meat pens have been completely revised to bring them into par with other livestock projects.

"Youth must start planning now to have their pens ready for Farm Show," Hailey said.

If you want to enter meat rabbits in the Farm Show auction, make sure you study the following rules.

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Rudy Ziegler is judged on showmanship during rabbit competition at the Montgomery Fair.

Raise Rabbits To Show

LOU ANN GOOD

Lancaster Farming Staff CREAMERY (Montgomery Co.) — Rudy Ziegler raises rabbits. Not just any rabbit, but Champagne D'argents.

Rudy learned how to breed rabbits for show competition by joining the Furry Friends 4-H Rabbit and Cavy Club. About 30 to 40 youth attend the monthly club meetings. They raise a variety of breeds, such as New Zealand, Californian, Creme D'argent, Satin, and Rex.

The rabbits must be tattooed in the presence of a 4-H agent or leader if it is entered into show judging.

Rabbits are judged on ears, eyes, teeth, nose, front legs, tail, body, gender, rear legs, feet, nails, and fur. These characteristics are compared to the ideal standard, which has been determined by the breed association.

When rabbits are shown, the person showing the rabbit places it on a table. The rabbit should be posed toward the judge.

Rudy recently showed Silver Beauty, a 5-month-old rabbit that weighted 8¾ pounds at the Montgomery 4-H Fair.

Rudy said that he breeds the rabbits for body type as stated by the rules.

It takes 28 to 32 days after breeding for the bunnies to be born. On the 27th day, Rudy puts a special nest box in the rabbit pen.

It has sawdust, hay, or straw in the bottom of it. The mother rabbit adds some of her fur to it to make a soft bed for the newborn bunnies, which are born without fur.

As soon as the bunnies are born, the mother covers them with her fur. About five are usually in each litter.

The bunnies' fur begins to grow in about two days, but it takes 10-14 days before they are ready to leave the nesting box.

The mother takes care of the bunnies for six weeks, although they start eating on their own when they are two to three weeks old.

Although they can be separated from their mother when only four weeks old, they do not do well if separated from their siblings before six weeks.

"They are a solitary animal," Rudy said. "The bucks will fight each other if they are put together."

Rudy lives in Spring City, Chester County, where he sells rabbit meat commercially from the farm.

Rudy plans to show his rabbits at the state Farm Show. To meet qualifications, he said, none of the rabbits in the pen can be disqualified. The rabbits must be under 10 weeks of age and not under five pounds.

If you would like to raise rabbits for showing, contact your county extension office or call Peg Hailer at (215) 343-0640.



Montgomery 4-H'ers show their rabbits at the county fair in preparation for the Pennsylvania Farm Show, which will allow exhibitors to auction their rabbits for the first time. From left, Tim McDermott, 12; Wendall Landis, 9; John McDermott, 14; Rudy Ziegler, 13; Dee Williams, 18; Jeni Moore, 14; Katelln Bechtle, 7; and Jackie Wentzel, 16.