



Pennsylvania Lamb and Wool Queen Stephanie Bowman raises about 60 sheep on the family's Lehartsville farm. She grew up tending sheep and lamb is a staple on the family table. Stephanie has won many ribbons for her Dorset

sheep and is named the 1994 Pennsylvania Dorset Breeders' Youth of the Year and the 1994 Outstanding 4-H Girl of the Reading Fair.

Meet The Pennsylvania Lamb And Wool Queen

LOU ANN GOOD

Lancaster Farming Staff
LENHARTSVILLE (Berks Co.) — The typical teen's diet is not lamb tacos, barbecued lamb steaks, and spicy lamb stir-fry. Neither does the typical teen's wardrobe consist of seven wool sweaters and classy wool suits. But Stephanie Bowman is out to change that.

As the Pennsylvania Lamb and Wool Queen, she practices what she preaches: Lamb tastes great — and wool is fashionable.

Lamb, raised from her own flock, is a dietary staple in the Bowman family. And, when it comes to purchasing clothes, Stephanie is always on the lookout for wool fashions. If she can't find them, she makes them.

People often compliment Stephanie whenever she wears one of her wool sweaters.

"Then I give my little spiel about wool and how it looks nice and comes in many different fashions," said Stephanie, who never loses an opportunity to speak in support of the wool industry.

"Many people aren't aware that wool isn't itchy to wear like it was years ago. And they don't realize how many different types of wool are available today," Stephanie said.

Stephanie, a petite whirlwind of energy, dabbles in numerous agricultural-related activities but zeroes her focus on lamb promotion.

The daughter of school teachers, Roger and Nancy Bowman, Stephanie said she learned early that she did not want to pursue a teaching degree. "I know all the problems," she emphasized the "all."

But Stephanie also learned what she does want to do from her parents.

"I grew up with a farming background and I definitely want to live on a farm, always," she said.

Her parents purchased their 20-acre farm before Stephanie was born. Even as a toddler, Stephanie followed her father around as he fed the sheep and gathered the eggs from the chickens.

They raised a few pigs and steers, but Stephanie tended to like the sheep best. Her brother Michael, who is 19, raises Corriedales.

When Stephanie was eight years old and old enough to join 4-H, Stephanie purchased her first Dorset lambs to intermingle with her father's crossbreed flock.

"I liked Dorsets because they look clean and are a good mother breed," Stephanie said.

Stephanie had a bit of an edge on other 4-H'ers because of her previous work with managing sheep on the family farm. But through 4-H, she learned to shear sheep and numerous other things.

"If it wasn't for 4-H, I wouldn't be where I am today," she said.

In addition to winning the queen title for the sheep industry, Stephanie also achieved the Youth of the Year Award from the Pennsylvania Dorset Breeders. This is given to the outstanding junior Dorset breeder in the state.

She has also received the Senior Shepherd Award in Berks County. This award is based on points achieved for sheep sheering, sheep placings at the fair, project book, fitting and showmanship, and a test on knowledge of the sheep industry.

This year, in addition to fitting and showmanship awards at the Reading Fair, Stephanie also was named the outstanding 4-H girl.

In addition to showing sheep at Allentown, Kimberton, Kutztown,

Oley, and Reading fairs, Stephanie and her brother also show at state competition and enter fleeces from their sheep in the wool competition at Farm Show.

"We've done tremendously well," Stephanie said of first and second placings for both Dorset and Corriedale breeds.

Make-It-With-Wool and leadline competitions are another area where Stephanie excels. For years, she has been competing in the leadline competitions held at Reading Fair and the Keystone International Livestock Exhibition. During leadline competition, competitors model wool outfits while leading a sheep around the show ring. Scores are based on the participant's skill in handling the animal and the appearance of both the shepherd and sheep.

One year, Stephanie placed in state competition in the Make-It-With-Wool contest.

"At first my mom sewed my outfits, but now I sew my own," Stephanie said.

She added that whenever she sews outfits for competitions, both she and her mother become frustrated and things get a bit stressful. In confidence, she confided that she considers herself a better seamstress than her mother — but not better than her grandmother.

"Seeing the finished product makes me feel really good," she said. Stephanie made a tailored suit for the queen competition, which she wore when crowned.

Before Stephanie was eligible to compete for the state Lamb and Wool Queen crown, she needed to achieve the crown for her county, which she did at the Reading Fair.

For the state competition, Stephanie needed to submit a resume, a lamb recipe, prepare a display promoting the industry, be inter-

viewed before a panel of judges, and give a speech promoting the industry at the sheep arena during KILE. Stephanie was crowned during festivities during KILE.

The crown was something she desired for many years.

"Amy Eshelman was my model," Stephanie said. Amy was a former sheep exhibitor and queen for the industry several years ago. As far back as could be determined, Amy and Stephanie are the only Berks Countians to achieve the Pennsylvania Lamb and Wool Queen title.

Recently, three lambs from Stephanie's flock were processed and served at the Berks County Livestock Banquet.

"We eat a lot of lamb at our house," Stephanie said.

She's proud that she has been able to convince many skeptical friends to try a sample of lamb.

"Most people like it if they try it," Stephanie said. "I even got one lady who had always refused to eat lamb to try it, because she promised that if I won the state crown than she would eat lamb."

Especially popular with Stephanie's friends is lamb tacos, which may be prepared with any taco recipe simply by replacing beef with lamb.

Stephanie is a senior at Kutztown Area High School, where she takes college prep and ag courses.

As president of both chapter and county FFA, Stephanie is enthusiastic about her school's agricultural program.

"The numbers are really growing tremendously in the past few years," she said of the attendance enrollment in ag programs.

FFA and 4-H activities take up most of Stephanie's spare time. Since she was 11 years old, Stephanie has been part of the county's livestock judging team. One year the team placed first in the state. She has achieved Chapter and Star degrees and proficiency awards in FFA. Recently, she participated in the FFA leadership conference.

She plays piano, was in school chorus until last year, and participated in band until she was in tenth grade.

"Band kept conflicting with 4-H activities. I preferred 4-H so I dropped band," Stephanie said.

She also has gathered a bit of dairy goat care expertise. When friends who have dairy goats go away, Stephanie hand-milks and feeds the goats.

After high school graduation, Stephanie plans to study dairy and animal science at Penn State and minor in poultry technology and management. She has been accepted at main campus but may decide to go to the Berks campus the first year or two.

"I prefer to know my professors and have them know me," she said.

Because raising lamb is not very profitable, it needs to be more of a hobby than a money-raising project. Stephanie hopes to do her part

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