

Farm Show A Means To Compare Beef Breeds

ANDY ANDREWS

Lancaster Farming Staff

MOUNT JOY (Lancaster Co.)

— If you want to promote your breed of choice, try the state Farm Show.

Farm Show is more than a tradition for Salunga Acres, which maintains 125 registered Polled Hereford brood cows. The annual event, at the Farm Show Complex, is one of the best ways "to compare our cattle to other people's cattle," said C.J. Furlong, farm manager.

George and Dorothy Metzler and family, owners of Salunga Acres, have been raising Polled Hereford cattle since 1983. At that time, they started with seven animals — four cows, two bred heifers, and a calf. In 1986, the first year they exhibited their stock at the Farm Show, they garnered premier breeder and premier exhibitor awards.

And that's a tradition they'd like to continue. For this year's Open

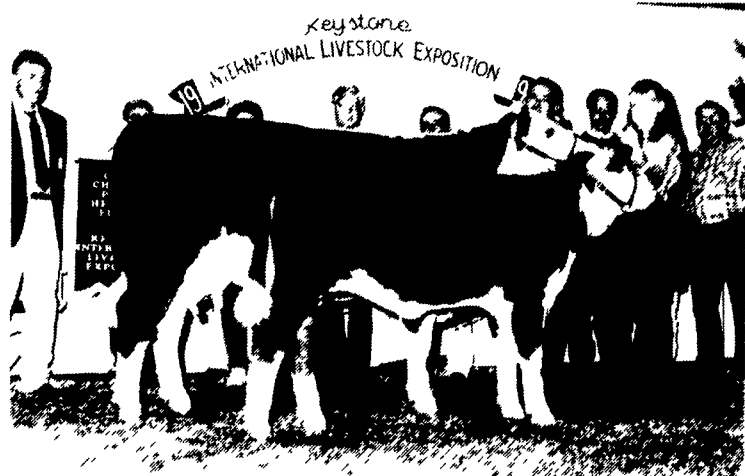
Breed Beef Show, the Metzlers are taking up nearly a dozen animals to the Farm Show, including a late spring bull calf, one early spring bull calf, one junior bull calf, and one late junior yearling bull. They're also taking several females, including two late spring heifer calves, two early spring heifer calves, two junior heifer calves, one senior heifer calf, one early summer yearling, and one late junior yearling.

Already the stock they're taking up has shown great promise. Two of the exhibits placed high at regional shows this year. One was named champion at the New York State Fair and the other was named champion at this year's Eastern National Show. The Metzlers received champion cow/calf at this year's Keystone International Livestock Exposition in Harrisburg.

Also, some of Metzler grandchildren will be showing animals at the junior shows, including John



"Dateline," a March 94 Polled Hereford bull calf, along with the Metzler family in Mount Joy, is getting ready for a banner year at the state Farm Show. With Dateline are, from left, Chris Hess, 7; Nicole Hess, 9; John Hess, 13; Dorothy Metzler, and George Metzler. C.J. Furlong is herd manager. Photo by Andy Andrews



Salunga Acres won champion cow/calf and overall grand champion female of the Polled Hereford Show during this year's Keystone International Livestock Expo.



John Hess helps walk one of the Salunga Acres steers. John will be showing his Angus steer, Comet, a September steer, at the Farm Show.

Hess, 13 and Nicole Hess, 9. Chris Hess, 7, will show at the 1996 Farm Show.

Each year, according to farm manager C.J. Furlong, Salunga Acres keeps about 10 yearling bulls for breeding stock. The remaining bulls are sent to consignment sales. They sell the bulk of the animals in cow/calf pairs to different feeders.

During the past several Farm Show years, the Metzlers have garnered a wide variety of champion and reserve champion honors at the Farm Show. Most notably, for George, it was garnering premier breeder awards in 1989, 1991, and 1993 that are most significant.

They hope to rebuild for another championship drive.

"We've increased the quality of the animals the last few years," said George Metzler. "I think we have very good quality to show and to breed."

In all, over three farms, the Metzlers maintain about 300 acres. "We're self-sustaining on everything but minerals, and we purchase our oats," said Metzler. "We specialize in breeding for seedstock. Everything is registered."

In the late 1980s, the National Polled Hereford Association started making use of expected progeny difference (EPD) information on registered sires. EPDs are used to select for improved traits against the average of the herd. Breeders can use EPDs to improve select traits in the herd, such as birth weight, weaning weight, yearling weight, milking, etc.



Chris Hess will be showing steers at the 1996 Farm Show.

"Our goal is to try to use genetics from different sires — AI-bred or from females — which we feel will provide the best progeny," said Metzler.

The Metzlers have been using EPD information to select farm stock since 1989, going for a "balance" in their herd genetic line, according to C.J. Furlong, farm manager.

"We're at a stage now where

we're not selecting for one major trait," said Furlong. "We're looking for a balance in EPDs."

According to Dorothy Metzler, Salunga Acres chose the Polled Hereford breed for its calmness and "docility."

"They're docile and I felt they would adapt to our operation better than any other breed," said George.

(Turn to Page F27)



Nicole and brother Chris Hess help feed the calves at Salunga Acres Farm.



Nicole Hess attends Martin, named after the TV show, an April steer.