

Kids Korner



Matt with his parents Melvin and Corena share their love for farming with the Samsels' grandchildren, twins Kayla and Bradley, 4, and Alexli, 18 months. The Samsels make Farm Show a family affair, and spend several nights in Harrisburg during the shows.

There's More To Farm Show Than Winning

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OLEY (Berks Co.) — Eleven-year-old Matt Samsel has been looking forward to this week all year. It's Farm Show Time!

Samsel is entering two heifer Herefords, Zina and Rosa, and an Angus steer named Bubba in competition.

"Sure, it would be nice to win, but I really don't do it to win," Matt said.

What Matt likes best about the Farm Show is talking with all the other folks who love steers and farming as much as he does.

"You can learn so much by talking with others. It's so neat to meet so many people," Matt said. "I really enjoy the experience."

Now a 7th grader at Oley Junior High School, Matt has a reputation among his school mates and teachers. One teacher summed it up by saying, "Ask him anything about chickens, farms, and tractors, and he can tell you everything."

Farming is Matt's life — nothing seems to come close in capturing his interest.

"I was part of the wrestling team and some other things, but I gave it up for 4-H because I like it a lot better," Matt said.

The family have about 20 head of cattle on their 13-acre Windy Valley Farm. Matt purchased five goats to help keep the weeds down.

"Ever since I can remember I'd follow dad around the place and help out," Matt said.

"He's a real hustler," Matt's dad Melvin said. "He's always hus-

ting to make a buck so he can buy more stock."

After his dad purchased his first steer for him several years ago, Matt has thought up projects to earn more money so that he can go to livestock auctions. Recently, he's been chopping and selling firewood for extra bucks.

Matt and his dad attend a lot of auctions. Matt said that bidding at an auction happens so fast that you must be prepared ahead of time to know exactly how high you want to bid and then stop if the bidding goes above that.

"Unless you go to a sale, you can't imagine seeing all those great animals at Dunwalke Farms," Matt said of the New Jersey sale where he purchased his steer. Peterson and Shaner Farms in Amityville is where Matt purchased a heifer this year.

He's really pleased with Bubba, which he purchased. As soon as he gave the final bid, another bidder offered him an additional \$500 on the spot for the steer, but Matt refused.

"I was pleased with what I got and I didn't want to sell," Matt said. "Dad thought I should take the money, but he left it up to me."

Matt's dream is to go West on a combine crew and later buy a farm. He likes all aspects of farming. Each year he also raises vegetables to enter in competition and local fairs.

His mother, Corena, said that Matt is mechanically inclined and likes to fix his dad's junk. Both collect antique tractors (full-sized)

and antique toys.

Although Matt is the only one in the Samsel family eligible to be a 4-H member, the whole family is involved.

"It's a great club," is echoed again and again by Matt and his parents. Not only do club members help one another but also parents help not only their own children but also other members.

"They aren't in it for money and fame. It's just everyone working together," Samsel said.

In addition to the state Farm Show, Matt shows at Oley, Kutztown, and Reading Fairs and at 4-H Round-up.

At the Pennsylvania Farm Show, the Samsels meet people from across the state.

"There're just wonderful people at the Farm Show. We enjoy meeting old friends," Corene said of the families they see each year at the annual event.

"It's a way to learn about different feeding programs and help in showing animals," Matt said.

Like many showmen, Matt spends several evenings sleeping in the barns with his animals.

"We have a lot of fun, and it isn't very quiet," Matt said.

One year, Matt was sound asleep in the hay, when a man started carrying him to a truck because he thought Matt was his son.

After raising animals for showing, the time eventually comes to part with it. This can be traumatic.

Matt said, "When I sold my first steer, he looked at me with his big

sad eyes as if to say, 'Are you leaving me here?'"

Matt said, "I'd rather he'd kick me so I wouldn't feel guilty."

All prize money goes into a special fund for college. Matt already decided he's going to Delaware Valley College to major in some type of agriculture.

Matt has two sisters and one brother who are married. His twin niece and nephew, Kayla and Bradley, 4, live with the Samsels. Another niece, Alexis, 18 months, lives nearby and often come to visit. Already the nieces and nephew show an interest in the animals and Grandpa promises to get them

started with their own animal as soon as they can join 4-H.

"I can't say enough good about 4-H. Kids learn responsibility, caring, and they meet so many wonderful people in the program."

According to Matt, Farm Show would not be complete without roast beef sandwiches, baked potatoes, and potato doughnuts.

"I also have to eat at least five of each of those things," Matt said.

When Matt enters the show ring, he said, he feels excited and nervous all at the same time. "But it's not important to win first place, I just love to enjoy the experience," he said.



Eleven-year-old Matt Samsel prepares this heifer for Farm Show.