

Kids Korner

Jennifer Finds Success With Southdowns

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AKRON (Lancaster Co.) —

Jennifer Zimmerman was not happy when her mother suggested she start raising sheep.

"I did not want to do it," Jennifer said as she recalled her attitude toward her mother's suggestion.

Two years later, Jennifer is delighted that she and her brothers, Jay, 15, and Jimmy, 11, decided to raise sheep and show them at 4-H and fair competitions.

"It took a while, but after we started showing sheep and learning more about them in 4-H, it became really interesting to work with them," Jennifer said.

Recently, Jennifer showed a Southdown aged ewe that was named Supreme Champion Sheep at the Elizabethtown Fair.

"The secret to having a champion, I think, is walking the sheep a lot," Jennifer said. She estimates that she spends about 5 to 7 minutes daily walking each of her sheep. She fastens harnesses on the sheep and usually walks 2 to 3 at a time.

It isn't easy for Jennifer to find time to care for her sheep. She lives in the town of Akron and can-

not raise sheep in the borough limits. Instead her sheep live at her aunt's farm in Lebanon.

"Every day that we don't have school and as much as we can on other days, we go to my aunt's place," Jennifer said.

Her aunt, who has been into breeding sheep for many years, has 50 Southdowns. The Zimmermans have about 17 head — all of them Southdowns.

Southdowns are one of the oldest breeds of sheep. The Southdown originated in England where it contributed to the development of other breeds. The Southdown is best suited to farm flock production. It is medium to small sized with gray to mouse-brown face and wool on the legs. An early maturing breed, it has good lambing ability, average milking ability and excellent crossing ability for producing meaty lamb carcasses at lightweights and hot-house lambs. The Southdown is adaptable to varied and wet climates, and yields a medium, easy-to-spin wool.

"I like Southdowns because they are smaller than a lot of other breeds and easier to show and prepare for shows," Jennifer said.

Her aunt's Lebanon County



Jennifer shows off Anyana, chosen the supreme champion Southdown at the Elizabethtown Fair.



Before shows, Jennifer prepares her Southdown lambs for shearing.



Jennifer lives in Akron with her parents, Jay and Joanne Zimmerman, but keeps her sheep with her Aunt Judy Moyer's Strawberry Southdowns.

place is called Strawberry Southdowns. Separate pens with plenty of room for running and exercising are erected among the tree-lined acres.

An Australian German Shepherd named Bear guards the sheep. Bear runs along the fence and barks whenever he thinks a sheep is not behaving.

"Sometimes a sheep will jump over the fence. Then Bear makes sure it doesn't go on the road," Jennifer said.

Jennifer knows all her sheep by name. She tries to select names to fit the sheep such as Chipmunk, which has big cheeks. Sometimes the sheep are already named when she purchases them, sometimes, she just likes a name. Such is Anyana, the supreme champion sheep that was named after a girl who

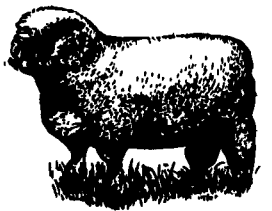
moved to Germany.

"I just thought it was a neat name," Jennifer said of the decision to name the champion sheep.

When Jennifer is not taking care of her sheep or in school, she is either delivering newspapers or playing field hockey at Ephrata High School.

"My brothers each have a newspaper route, too," Jennifer said. "That's how we get money to pay for our sheep."

The money earned for winning is used to pay for the feed and to buy more sheep.



Sometimes the sheep are not very cooperative, but Jennifer tries to walk each one 5-7 minutes a day.