

Romney Ewe Delivers Quads

(Continued from Page B11)

to die. "I sat here in the barn for about 10 minutes with her. She got up, laid down again and started to push. And this teeny little ewe lamb was born, so tiny but perfectly formed. I had taken from 8:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. for all the lambs to be delivered. I couldn't believe it was even alive," grins Pat, still marveling at the memory of the surprise.

However, the ordeal had taken quite a toll on Athena. The largest ram lamb weighed in at 10.5 pounds, while its brother and larger sister each weighed nearly nine pounds. Little Bit, the tiny infant, tipped the scale at a mere skin-and-bones five pounds.

After the births, Athena's udder was full and distended. The lambs soon learned to lay down next to her and nurse. Bottles every three hours supplemented Athena's milk and warming lights kept the babies from getting chilly. Pat's sleep suffered for the next few weeks, since part of every night was spent in the barn, bottle feeding lambs.

"I sat out part of the March ice storm during the night in the barn," she relates of the rather frightening event. "At 2 a.m., tree limbs were almost constantly crashing down outside."

With vitamins, rest, and Pat's tender, loving care, Athena regained her strength and in four days was back on her feet. An excellent mother, she knew instantly when one of the lambs was out of her sight. Little Bit was kept on

bottle feedings and became the classic bottle-fed lamb, scampering along behind Pat as she tended the others. She soon learned to crawl up on Pat's lap and put her head on her shoulder.

It was the acquisition of a pony that originally put the McKinnys into the sheep business.

"We got a pony years ago for the boys, from a friend of ours," explains Pat. "It got out and ran loose for several hours around the neighborhood. We decided to get it a lamb for company and were told a single lamb would get lonely."

"And that's how the boys got into 4-H Lamb Club," she adds. "The first lambs were bought because they were cute. We were always dead last in the show ring and were happy if they ever won anything other than a brown ribbon."

Blake, however, did win numerous fitting and showmanship awards during his 4-H sheep exhibitor years.

But every year when it came time to sell the lambs, tears flowed all around the family. So market lambs were given up in favor of breeding sheep and the first Romney was purchased from a New Jersey breeder. With its quality bloodlines and superior fleece characteristics, the McKinney's new acquisition soon changed their brown show ribbons to purple champion rosettes. In recent years, Blake and Clay have forgone sheep showing for sports participation, leaving their mother as the family's head shepherd.

Pat is an accomplished spinner and knitter of the wools from the small flock, along with marketing fleeces to other wool crafters. The lustre and crimp of the Romney fleeces make them especially popular with the artisans who use wool in their various creative pursuits.

Though the quads show some individuality in their fleece characteristics, they all show quality. Pat plans to keep both Little Bit and her sister, Hannah, as part of the small breeding flock. One ram lamb is already sold and she hopes to market the other to a breeding flock where his parental champion bloodlines can be passed on to other generations of lambs.

Capernicus, the flock's ram and sire of the quads, was lost to an unfortunate accident during this past winter. A massive 300-pounder, he was a former supreme ram over all breeds winner at the York Fair junior shows. But the ram had in recent years gotten a bit rambunctious in his play. After one of the winter snows, Blake and Clay were sledding on the pasture hill and the ram took to chasing them, crashing his head into a tree during the pursuit. He died a few days later.

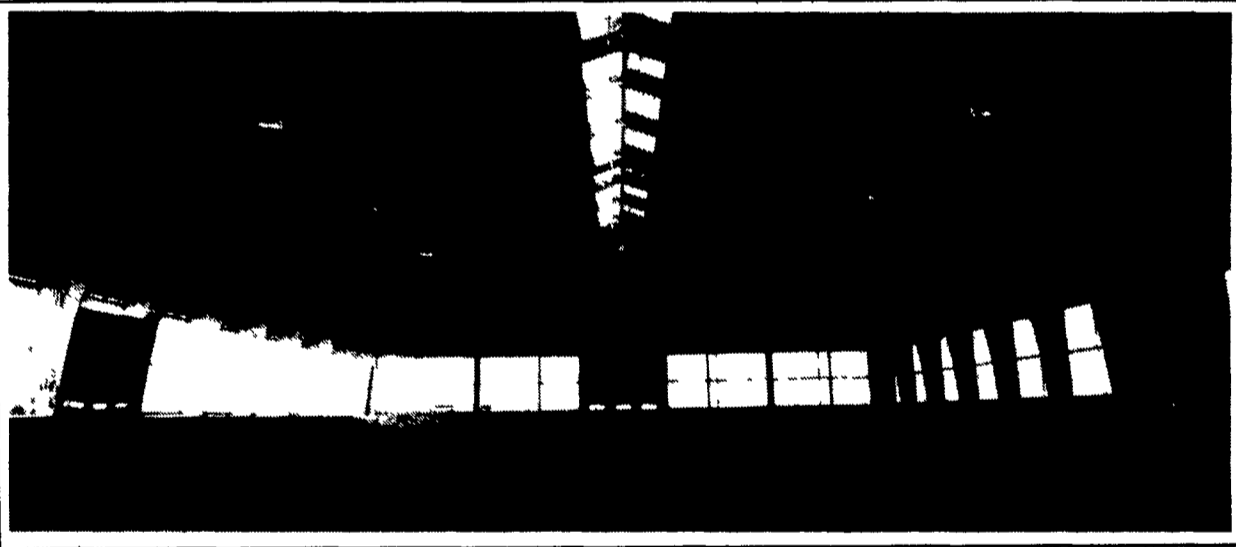
The McKinnys expect to replace their ram over the summer and rebreed Athena and her flock-mate ewes later in the fall. One thing they do not expect is a repeat of the surprise quadruplet birth.

For Athena's sake, Pat McKinney would probably be happy with just one good-sized, healthy ewe lamb next season.



Little Bit, last-born and tiniest of the quadruplet lambs, comes running for a bottle when Pat McKinney enters the sheep pens.

Riding
Arena



Ph. (717) 866-6581 FAX (717) 866-7237



701 E. Linden St., RICHLAND, PA 17087

Stables



Over 38 years quality products & materials...
Let us help you with your building needs!

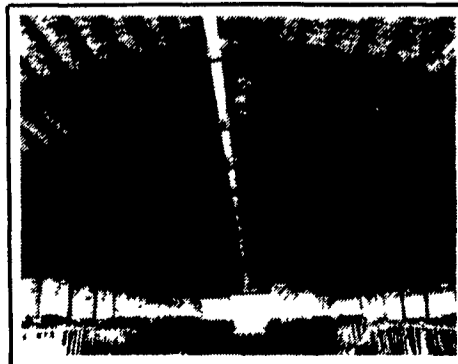
- GLU-LAM ARCHES
- GLU-LAM BEAMS
- GLU-LAM TREATED POSTS
- ROOF TRUSSES
- FLOOR TRUSSES
- T&G AND V-GROOVE DECKING



Trusses for Chicken House



"The Sign of Quality In Engineered Timber"



Free Stall Barn Interior



Free Stall Barn Exterior