

# For Sheep Exhibitors, Farm Show Preparation Starts With Fox Terrier

**ANDY ANDREWS**  
Lancaster Farming Staff  
ELVERSON (Chester Co.) — Maria and Inez Stoltzfus will take practice any way they can get it. Several years ago, Maria and her sister took their fox terrier, "Toots," out of the pen and pretended to wash and clip it—all in a concerted (though imagined) effort to make it grand champion sheep.

"We'd pretend to show and fit it," Maria says, glancing at Inez while both tried to stop laughing. "We'd bring it out and try to act like we were washing it and everything."

"But her hair was too short," replied Inez, giggling.

How did their dog place?

"I'm sure it always won," Inez said.

In the end, according to the Stoltzfus family, even though Toots escaped the pen, Inez said the terrier "never tried to bite us or anything."

For years, while growing up on the family 10-acre farmette in Elverson, the Stoltzfus sisters watched as their brother and sister, Hans and Kendra, exhibited champion sheep. Maria and Inez, who care for almost a dozen sheep, admitted they had a yearning to exhibit in the show ring—not just in shepherd's competition (which both have done several times at Farm Show) but in the junior market lamb show.

This year will be the first for Maria and Inez at the junior market lamb show on Wednesday at the Farm Show.

Maria, 15, and Inez, 17, are daughters of Carl and Hilda Stoltzfus in Elverson. For years they've been exhibiting at the Chester County 4-H Market Lamb Show and Sale as well as the Goshen and Kimberton fairs. This is their first time to exhibit at Farm Show.

Maria, a sophomore at Conestoga Christian School, will be exhibiting Abby, a Suffolk crossbred ewe, purchased from Ken Smoker in Lancaster. Abby weighed in at

approximately 117 pounds this week and will most likely show in the medium weight division at Farm Show.

Inez, a senior at Conestoga Christian School, will be exhibiting Sammy, a purebred Montadale ram weighing 130 pounds, in the heavyweight division. The Montadale was purchased from Cheryl Fairbairn, Chester County livestock agent.

Maria said the name "Abby" was chosen for her Suffolk ewe because "I guess I heard it somewhere and I thought that's a cute name for a sheep."

Maria said that when she purchased Abby, "I was surprised at how gentle she was and everything. She doesn't mind me too much, either, because I go in there and put the halter on and walk her all around, and she doesn't really like that. Now she runs from me when I go in the barn. She's pretty gentle, though she can be stubborn. They're all pretty stubborn sometimes."

As for Sammy, Inez's Montadale ram, "Well, he's pretty good, he's pretty tame," she said. "He doesn't like me right now because I've been leading him around and trying to get him halter-trained and stuff. He's kind of mad at me. But he's been pretty gentle and he cooperates."

Older sister Kendra, 21, who will soon embark to Albania with husband Dwayne as part of a church ministry, began showing when she was eight years old. She was given a Hampshire ewe lamb.

She showed sheep at the Farm Show in 1983-1984.

"I didn't do real well," she said. "But it was a good learning experience. I didn't have real high quality — my sheep wasn't real high quality. But it was a very good experience for me. I learned a lot."

What Kendra learned about Farm Show was "the importance of being fair," she said. Kendra's last year of showing was 1993 when she won champion market lamb in the county.



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The past several years, Inez and Maria have been competing in the shepherd's contest, which involves taking a "raw" lamb from the pen, cleaning it, clipping it, and making it presentable for a show. A portion of that involves answering questions, such as equipment, feed, or other items used in raising sheep. Inez said the contest "tests your total ability and knowledge about sheep."

"You judge some wool sometimes," said Maria. "And to be able to get in to the Farm Show with that kind of competition, you have to do well in the county," said their mother, Hilda.

Kendra said that the family has been "focused more on breeding for market all along, rather than show. That's what we have poured a lot of our energies into."

Kendra said that Maria's line of sheep have done the best overall in market competition.

Hilda Stoltzfus said that "we

always had a flock of sheep at home."

Maria and Inez are excited about this year's Farm Show.

"I thought it would be fun," Inez said. "I thought it would be a good experience to go up there."

Inez said she never watched a market lamb show at the Farm Show before, but she expects tough competition. Maria said she wants to go to Farm Show for the experience. "I'm not expecting to do real well," she said. However, she hopes to see good prices paid for the lambs.

The sisters are taking time away from school, from serving on student council and school choir, to attend Farm Show. They also are active in their youth group at Hopewell Mennonite Church. Inez serves on the high school yearbook staff.

"We've always wanted to go. But our ewes lamb in February and so that would be too early to have

them, so then we had to go buy them."

Maria has taken her lambs into elementary school to show them to a class. She recently gave a presentation to her 10th grade English class on what it's like to raise sheep.

"I just gave a presentation a couple of weeks ago," Maria said. "It was an expository speech and I demonstrated how to fit a sheep."

Maria spoke about the importance of clipping before the summer heat sets in, which can pose a health challenge to sheep that aren't clipped.

One question Maria fielded: had she ever nicked a sheep while cutting off the wool?

"Sometimes you cut it a little bit, but I never cut it bad," she said.

Maria kept a ewe lamb, Tina, a Suffolk crossbred, which she intends to show at the county sheep roundup.

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## Indiana County Families Come To Farm Show

**RANDY WELLS**  
Indiana Co. Correspondent  
MARION CENTER (Indiana Co.) — A sizable contingent of Indiana County farm families will be among the exhibitors, participants and spectators at the 81st Farm Show set to open Saturday, Jan. 11 in Harrisburg.

For some, it would not be January without an adventuresome trip over wintry highways to the nation's largest indoor agricultural exposition. Others are looking forward to their first Farm Show experience.

Jerry Ray of Shelocla, plans to travel east with at least six of his Belgian draft horses to compete in several classes, including all the group classes, men's and women's cart classes and the new rider draft horse competition.

Ray and his wife Shirley started going to the farm show nearly 25 years ago, and have missed only two years when the weather was really bad.

"Road conditions are what I worry about more than anything," he said.

The blizzard during the '96 Farm Show forced them to stay over an extra day in Harrisburg, then their truck slid into a snow bank near Ebensburg on the trip home. None of the horses were hurt.

Ray said he especially appreciates the improvements at the Farm Show's horse barn that have made the stay much more enjoyable for both the exhibitors and the animals.

The show is good advertisement for his Belgians, Ray said, and this year he'll have an eye open for potential buyers. His farm now has 19 of the big horses, and he hopes to find new homes for as many as five of them next spring.

Terry and Sandy Fairman have been traveling from their home near Creekside to the Farm Show for several years with daughters Nicole, 11, and Brittany, 9, and several head of Limousin cattle.

This year there will be some changes. The Fairman entourage will include new daughter Brooke, who will be six months old in January, and the Fairmans will be showing Hampshire pigs instead of cattle.

"It's relaxing. It's our vacation. It's a nice getaway," said Sandy of the Farm Show.

The older girls will exhibit the pigs in the 4-H competition.

Steve Kwisnek of Scenic View Farms near Clarksburg is a 20-year veteran of the Farm Show, and typically stays four or five days each year.

He plans to make the trip in January with 10 of his Southdown

sheep.

Scenic View Farms sells breeding sheep, and Kwisnek values the annual farm show from a business standpoint.

"If you do good (in the competition), you find buyers," he said.

For Clyde McConaughy of Mahoning Creek Farms near Smicksburg, the farm show is also an integral part of his year-round business. His farm raises Duroc and Hampshire hogs, and McConaughy said it's important that breeders make every effort to exhibit as many animals at the farm show as possible.

"You've got to keep the number of animals up. We try to keep them up to 30 head or more in each breed" to attract buyers from as far away as New England and Virginia.

McConaughy plans to do his part by trucking at least 16 animals to January's show.

"We started showing (at the Farm Show) in 1939," McConaughy said. "We're probably the oldest exhibitor there."

The Farm Show helps promote his farm and his business ventures during the rest of the year.

"It lets people know you're still in operation," he said.

Mary Miller, a home economics teacher in the Northern Cambria Middle School, hopes to see her

daughters participate in the 4-H "Fashions with Flair" fashion show at the Farm Show.

Miller and her husband Tony are sponsors of the "Treasure Seekers" community 4-H club in the Strongstown area, and their four children — Mary, 12, Michael, 11, Tony, 8, and Amanda, 6 — will be visiting the show for the first time.

Mary won prizes in the Indiana County Fair and Green Township Community Fair for a vest, shirt, shorts, beret and decorated shoes she made. They'll be on display at the Farm Show, and Mary may be chosen to model them in the fashion show.

Daughter Amanda may have the chance to model clothes sewn by her mother.

Other members of the Treasure Seekers are sending cooking, sewing, wildlife and woodworking entries for the many 4-H competitions.

Although both sets of grandparents lived on farms, it will be the first visit to the state Farm Show for Jennifer Cribbs, Indiana County's Queen Evergreen.

A freshman marketing major at Indiana University of Pennsylvania, Cribbs expects a busy two-day itinerary, including opportunities to meet Gov. Tom Ridge and Agriculture Secretary Charles

Brosius, giving comments along with other commodity queens at the show's International Day dinner banquet on Friday, Jan. 10, and welcoming visitors, especially at the show's Christmas tree exhibit.

"My dad's been telling me all about it," she said. "I'm expecting it to be like the county fair — but really big."

"It's Old Home week for me. It's been one of the bright spots of my life," said Clayton Winebark of Rochester Mills of the 51 Farm Shows he has attended.

He's planning on being back for the 52nd time in January.

Winebark is a former regional director of the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture's Region IV headquartered in Gibsonia. Over the years he's made many acquaintances and friends at the annual exposition.

"I started showing pigs (at the farm show) in 1949 as a high school freshman," he said. "I'll go as long as I'm able."

Now retires, he'll have more time to watch his four grandchildren showing pigs, and plans to spend several days at the show.

The change to a Saturday start a few years ago was an improvement, he said, making it possible for more students, teachers and working people to visit the show on the weekend.