

# As Ag Progress Event Attests, Skillathons Grow In Popularity



Amanda Darr, Boswell, Somerset County Lamb and Wool Queen, right, talks shop with Dwight Smith, Berlin, during the skillathon.



Grand and reserve champions at the skillathon and live lamb show during Ag Progress Days. Front row, from left, Carl Rudy, George Peters, Chris Herr, judge for the show, Denise Hardisky, and Jason Levan. Back, from left, Amanda Miller, Jayson Harpster, Michael Burrell, and Jill Neiman.

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ROCKSPRING (Centre Co.) — A two-year-old Ag Progress Days event is already creating its own offspring, spawning interest in 4-H members from a multicounty region, involving a wide array of 4-H clubs and using educational tools employed by the livestock industry to motivate youth.

Wednesday marked the second Lamb Skillathon and Live Lamb Show at the Penn State showcase event, Ag Progress. At the skillathon, 35 4-H contestants paraded 31 lambs in the show ring, in addition to judging meats, scoring on equipment and herd health quizzes, answering questions on feeds and nutrition, and brushing up on their management skills.

Combined with a live lamb show that judged animal type and exhibitor showmanship skills, an overall champion and reserve of the day were selected.

Keith Bryan, Penn State animal science instructor and judge of the skillathon herd health, equipment, feeds, and overall management contests, noted that 4-H clubs continue to adopt skillathons in their programs. Clarion and Venango counties put some skillathon contests in place, Lebanon has tried it, and Berks started it last year and conducted a skillathon again this year, Bryan noted.

"Everybody has been very positive with the skillathon's overall effects," said Dr. Bill Henning meats specialist with Penn State. "The emphasis has been taken of winning in the show ring and placed on more general knowledge of the industry."

Henning served as meats judge at the lamb skillathon, assisted by Joan Grim, Thomasville.

4-H members from several counties participated in Wednesday's contest at Ag Progress Days, including Berks, Lehigh, Montgomery, Dauphin, Lycoming, Susquehanna, Clinton, York, Centre, and Blair.

According to Henning, several Penn State Alpha Zeta fraternity members helped conduct the contest, in addition to club leaders.

Henning, meats judge, said that contest participants were required to properly identify the cuts,



Meats table contestants judge cuts during the annual Ag Progress Days skillathon.

including wholesale type, retail name, and actual type (whether a steak, slice, chop, or roast).

Bryan also served as type judge. Chris Herr, Pennsylvania deputy ag secretary, was showmanship judge.

A possible maximum individual score for the skillathon was 500 points. The contestants were divided into four age groups: 9-10 year-olds, 11-12 year-olds, 13-14 year-olds, and 15-year-olds and over. Five stations were worth 100 points each. There was a total of 150 possible points from the showmanship division and 350 from the type division.

Fifty percent of the total number of points came from the skillathon itself, 35 from lamb ranking, and 15 percent from showmanship, when selecting the overall champion. The overall champion received a \$200 savings bond and the reserve a \$100 savings bond.

In the skillathon contest, first place premium was \$50, second \$45, and third, \$40. In the livestock show, first place premium was \$30, second \$25, and third, \$20.

Overall champions were selected. For 15 years old and more, first place went to Mike Burrell, second to Jill Neiman, and third to Cathryn Levan. For contestants age 13-14, first place went to Jayson Harpster, second to Amanda Miller, and third to Morris Pratt III.

For contestants aged 11-12, first place went to Denise Hardisky, second to Jason Levan, and third to Dana Hardisky.

In the 9-10 year old age category, first place went to George Peters, second to Carl Rudy, and third to Molly Enos.



At the feed identification table, Deldra Smith, White Oak 4-H Club member, left, and Debbie Rudy, Lower Dauphin 4-H Club member, write down their answers.



Jayson Harpster, Centre County 4-H Sheep Club member, left, and Morris Pratt, Penns Valley 4-H member, examine information at the herd health table.



Carl Rudy, Dauphin County 4-H, writes down his answers at the skillathon equipment table.

