

Becoming A Champion

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land has been named premier breeder in Pennsylvania from points tallied from the state Farm Show and Pennsylvania breeder shows. Points are tallied for bred cattle, which have been purchased and shown by other owners.

"Showing fits in well for us," Barb said.

The one thing that Larry does that Barb doesn't fit the cattle for shows such as the state Farm Show, Atlantic National, Breeder, and Keystone International Livestock Exposition (KILE).

Clipping styles are set at national shows.

"Every year, we see something a little bit different. Every fitter does something a little different," Barb said.

Some styles, at first, don't seem appealing. "But if the cattle do well in the show ring, then you take a closer look."

Larry said he realized the importance of fitting an animal when he was a teen-ager. He had attended a national show where he saw hair body clipped similar to the way they are trimmed today. "I couldn't wait to get home and try it — and I was the first in the area to try it," Larry said.

In the '60s, people concocted their own mixtures to prepare cattle for the show ring. Today, the market abounds with products.

The Weavers generally feed 120 head of market steers. Silos are used for storing the harvest.

Weaverland's white barns with gray trim, and the stone and stucco house have been in the family for four generations. The barn is dated 1805. The house is older but no date has been established.

Weaver's have added their own personal style with a brick patio and walks surrounded by profuse perennials. The kitchen table is placed in front of long bay windows that overlook acres of rolling farmland.

When Larry began farming, the farm had 44 acres. Later, he purchased an adjoining farm with 40 acres that had been part of the original deed.

Contented cats and frisky kittens, and an occasional moo belie the facade that all is well in farming.

A summer drought has resulted in severe losses. Larry estimated

that he had a 70 percent corn loss, the worse that he or his dad remembers.

Larry is what he calls "a pioneer in ag preserve" because their farm was the first in the area to be included in ag preservation.

"The whole program could have been set up differently. Instead of giving money outright, they should have given farmers a tremendous tax break that was ongoing. Government has got to preserve the farmer instead of the farmland. If farming is profitable, the best farmland will be preserved," Larry said.

A farmer who has remained on the cutting edge of technology, the Weavers are frustrated by declining commodity prices and high equipment costs.

"I'm in all the wrong things," Larry said of raising beef and eight acres of tobacco. A few years ago he got out of the hog market when it was struggling.

Barb takes care of the farm bookkeeping. She also worked for the tobacco auction cooperative formed in the county.

This has been a tough summer for many farmers and the Weavers are no exception. Barb said it was so depressing to look out the window and see crops shriveling that she took off to Potter County to spend 10 days at their cabin. During hunting season, the couple hunt together. She also finds relaxation from farm pressures by playing golf.

The Weavers said that breeding cattle has been the one area of farming that has remained stable for them.

The couple both love watching "the babies," Barb said. "There is no greater satisfaction than breeding and seeing how the calves turn out. And it's great to see kids who purchase our stock do well in shows."

There is also a downside. Occasionally stock is sold to some who don't feed them properly. One in particular, Barb said, had the appearance of a champion, but when she saw it after it had been sold, it was a bag of bones.

"I cried," she said. "You need the right kind of calf to begin with, but you also need precise feeding, exercise, and breeding to continue (the lineage)."

"Years ago, you made the cattle

look tall. Today you want them to look more blocky," Larry said.

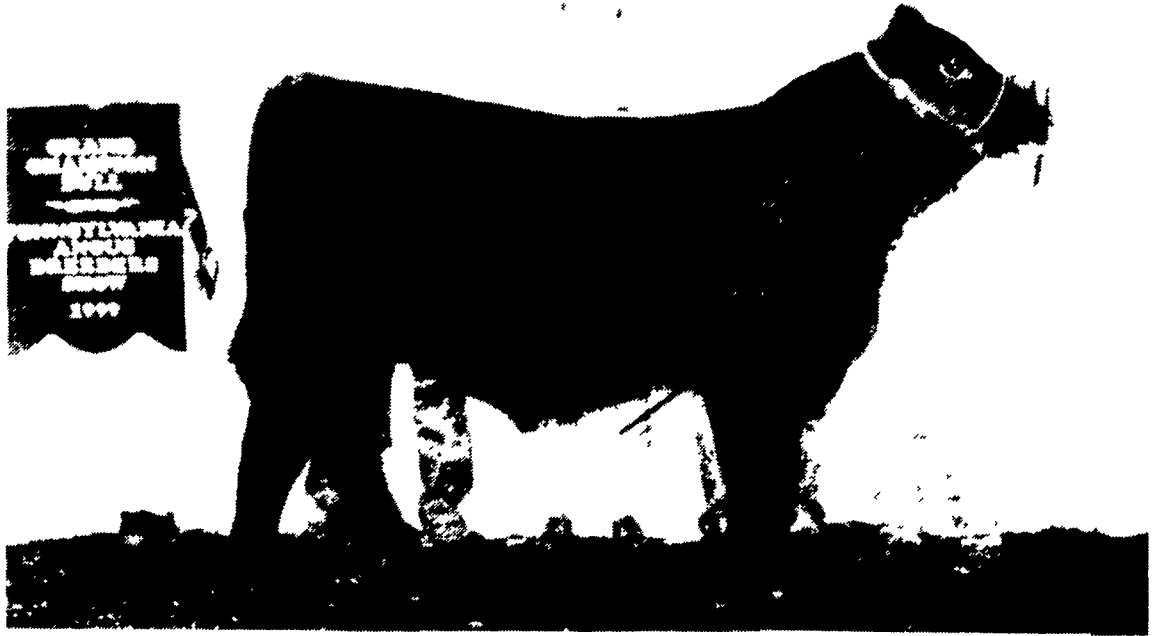
Meat packers have a big influence on finishing. For a number of years, lean was in style.

"But people found out it's no fun to eat lean meat. Now you want meat marbling and it must have a

black hide to be labeled Certified Angus," Larry said.

From the time Larry first started showing until today, he said that things have changed dramatically.

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Grand champion bull honors went to Weaverland Fullback 829 at the Pennsylvania Angus Breeders Show. The October 1998 son of Rito 9FB3 of 5H11 Fullback was exhibited by Weaverland Valley Farms. From left are Pennsylvania Angus Queen Sarah Grim, Allen Smith, judge; Barb and Larry Weaver, and daughter Kristin Ebersole.



Weaverland Edella McKala captured grand champion female honors at the Pennsylvania Angus Breeders Show held recently in Huntingdon. The April 1998 daughter of Rito 9FB3 of 5H11 Fullback first topped the junior division. Weaverland Valley Farms, New Holland, exhibited the winning entry. From left are Sarah Grim, Pa. Angus Queen; Allen Smith, who evaluated the 95 head exhibited in the open show; and Barb and Larry Weaver with daughter Kristin Ebersole of Weaverland Valley Farms, New Holland.

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