

First 4-H Horse Skillathon At Ag Progress

ROCKSPRING (Centre Co.) — Ag Progress Days recently conducted its first 4-H Youth Equine Skillathon here.

4-H youth competed for premiums and savings bonds in three categories. Those categories included showmanship; a class that all 4-H'ers must do at their county roundup to complete a performance horse project; and a written test that covered general knowledge relating to horses and identification stations of horse-related items and diagrams.

The contest mirrors similar contests held throughout the state. This was the second year for a lamb skillathon also conducted during Ag Progress Days.

Contestants registered in advance and were required to be enrolled in a 4-H horse project. The 4-H'ers were required to bring their own horses for showmanship, their 1999 project horse. Three age groups were rotated through the three competitions simultaneously.

Skillathon organizer was Kathy Brown, Bellefonte, a long-time 4-H volunteer. She was assisted by Karen Myers, Spring Mills, and Jana Peters, Pennsylvania Furnace, also 4-H leaders.

Showmanship judge was Stacy Urbanik, a former 4-H member.

In scoring, stations made up 30 points, written test 30 points, and showmanship, 40 points. The overall champion received a \$200 savings bond. Overall reserve won a \$100 savings bond. Premiums were paid in each category and division, first through fifth.

Three age categories were 8-11, 12-14, and 15-18.

Following is a list of show placings.

HORSE SKILLATHON AT AG PROGRESS RESULTS

Age Group 1 (8-11 Years): 1. Samantha James. 2. Lauren Eichstadt. 3. Jennifer Rudy.
Age Group 2 (12-14 Years): 1. Shelly Campbell. 2. Kitty Peters. 3. Rebecca James.
Age Group 3 (15-18 Years): 1. Rebecca Barnhart. 2. Katie Comerford. 3. Lindsey Geisel.



Top 10 overall contestants from the Horse Skillathon at Ag Progress Days, front row, from left, Sarah Grove, fourth place; Lindsey Geisel, third; Katie Comerford, second; and Rebecca Barnhart, first. Back row, from left, Rebecca James, 10th place; Amanda Arnold, ninth place; Kitty Peters, eighth place; Heather Weaver, seventh place; Shelly Campbell, sixth place; and Meghan Barbour, fifth place.

Home Canned Can Be More Economical, Nutritious

UNIVERSITY PARK (Centre Co.) — If you're looking for ways to save money and get back to basics, try home canning. Canning can be an excellent, low cost method of preserving foods.

"The principal advantage of canning home-grown produce is that it can be a lot cheaper than buying fruits and vegetables," says Luke LaBorde, assistant professor of food science in Penn State's College of Agricultural Sciences. "And you're harvesting them at their optimum flavor and maturity, so you get a better product."

According to LaBorde, fruits and vegetables begin losing vitamins as soon as they are harvested. About half of their vitamins may be lost within a few days. Preserving produce immediately can prevent much of this loss.

Before canning food, it's important to do your homework, LaBorde says. Both first-time and experienced canners run the risk of causing food-borne illness if they are not careful. Canning preserves food by removing oxygen, destroying enzymes and preventing growth of undesirable bacteria, yeasts and molds.

For safety's sake, he says, always begin with top-quality produce.

"Can fruits and vegetables picked from your garden or purchased from nearby growers when the produce is at its peak," recommends LaBorde. "Fruits and vegetables should be fully ripe but not overripe and should be free of diseases and bruises.

"Peaches and other stone fruits should be ripened one or more days between harvest and canning. Other fresh fruits and vegetables should be canned immediately. If you must wait, keep produce in a cool, dark place."

The bacterium Clostridium botulinum poses the most serious threat. Growth of this bacterium in canned foods may cause botulism, a deadly form of food poisoning. "Just a taste of food containing this toxin can be fatal," said LaBorde.

"Low-acid foods, such as meat, poultry, seafood and vegetables must be preserved using a pressure canner," LaBorde says. "Boiling-water canners do not destroy the bacterium that causes botulism."

Your canned foods should

pass this test:

- Full jars should have proper head space (the space between the food and the lid).
- Liquids should just cover solids.
- Jars should be free of air bubbles.
- Produce should be free of imperfections as well as stems, cores and seeds.
- Jars should be properly sealed.
- Food should have a characteristic, uniform color.

"The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has issued research-based recommendations concerning canning and food safety," says LaBorde. "If you decide to preserve your own food, make sure you follow these recommendations."

The USDA has prepared a comprehensive publication that contains up-to-date recommendations for canning food at home. "The Complete Guide to Home Canning" (Bulletin #539) is invaluable for people who are canning for the first time.

Experienced canners will find information to help them improve their practices.

The guide explains the scientific principles of canning, discusses canning equipment and

describes basic canning ingredients and procedures. It is available for \$6 from the College of Agricultural Sciences Publications Distribution Center. For ordering information, call (814) 865-6713.



County Council Elects Officers

On Sept. 13, County Council conducted their first meeting for the 1999-2000 year, at the county extension office in Montrose at 7:30 p.m.

Officer election results were: president, Jason Corey; vice president, Joellyn Himka; secretary, Stacey Rezykowski; song

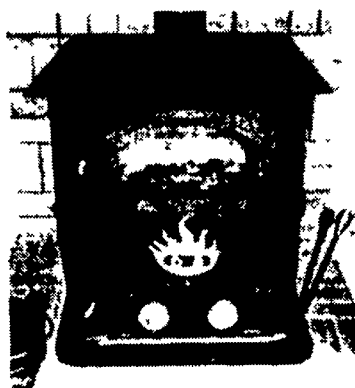
and game leaders, Dana Wells and Ben Hibbard; and news reporter, Jaimie Himka.

Members interested in joining county council should call the extension office at (570) 278-1158 and ask for Rosie Hibbard or come to the next meeting Nov. 8 at 7:30 p.m. Members must be 13 years of age or over.

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