

## Nicole Hess Reigns As PA. Polled Hereford Princess

LOU ANN GOOD

*Lancaster Farming Staff*  
MOUNT JOY (Lancaster Co.) — Life for Nicole Hess has been filled with 4-H activities and caring for cattle.

Her grandparents, George and Dorothy Mentzer were nationally known breeders of Salunga Acres Polled Herefords. Her parents, Deb and Bob Hess, met through 4-H livestock competition and continued their involvement by leading the 4-H Red Rose Beef Club.

With that background, it was inevitable that Nicole Hess would grow up excelling in 4-H and enamored with the reddish brown and white cattle grazing in the family's meadows.

As a 15-year-old she now wears the tiara proclaiming her Pennsylvania's Polled Hereford Princess.

"I've been showing since I was eight years old. I won't show any breed other than Herefords. None are calmer or sweeter," she said.

Raising Herefords for show is not just a means for attaining ribbons and premiums for Nicole. "I cry everytime I sell one," Nicole admitted. "I still remember Herbie, my first steer. He was more a pet than a steer."

Raising three teenagers is a time consuming responsibility for parents Deb and Bob Hess. This past year has been especially difficult. Deb is undergoing chemotherapy for cancer. But that hasn't deterred them from volunteering many hours working with the 29 members of the 4-H Beef Club.

Deb said, "We're convinced that 4-H teaches responsibility and keeps kids off the street. I've seen kids in trouble turn around when they got involved in 4-H."

For a number of years, membership in the Beef Club dwindled, but recently a revival of interest in showing beef has boosted membership to 29. The space and expense required to raising beef seemed to be a detriment, and many 4-H'ers were

raising sheep, goats, or pigs instead.

"I'm not sure why membership is increasing," Deb said of the eight new members who joined this year, "but it may be that parents who have shown beef are now encouraging their offspring to become active in the club."

The challenge of handling a large animal and the process of watching the animal develop fascinates Nicole and her siblings.

She said that her brother John usually checks newborn calves, dips their navels, and makes sure everything is okay. Cattle are fed a special mix containing soybeans, corn, and cattle impact.

Because Nicole and John need to leave for school earlier than Chris, it is Chris who usually takes care of morning feedings.

Show steers are halter broken by placing a halter on them.

"They drag the halter around about a week. Then one of us takes the end of the halter so they get used to seeing someone walking with them," Nicole said.

"Each of the calves have a different personality and react differently," Nicole said of the time period required to tame a calf. In the Hess household, Nicole has the reputation for "spoiling" or turning her charges into docile pets.

This has probably been a plus in the show ring, where Nicole has won top showmanship awards at the Elizabethtown Fair every year since she was eight years old. The downside of becoming attached to a 4-H project is the inevitable parting at the 4-H sale.

"I cry when I sell every one, but especially Cowboy," she said of her favorite steer, which she showed two years ago.

So far, Nicole said, her annual steer projects have placed third or fourth at every 4-H competition. "But I'm working toward first place," she said.



Nicole Hess grew up with Polled Herefords. For her, no other breed compares to the Polled Herefords, which she said, "are calmer and sweeter than any other breed."

Her mom said that the biggest difference between showing in 4-H now compared to when she was a member is that now the top prize seems to go to whoever can afford to buy the best instead of the person who works his or her way to the top.

This is the first year that Nicole is not raising a steer from Salunga Acre stock. Her grandfather died a few years ago, and her grandmother held a dispersal sale.

Nicole said her 4-H project was purchased from Salem, N.Y.

This is the first year of FFA for Nicole. Like her brother John, she needed to transfer from Donegal School District to Elizabethtown School District in order to join FFA.

She's really excited about the opportunities available through FFA. In her first year, she has already won awards in public speaking, dairy foods judging, and livestock judging.

Nicole volunteers at a local nursing home and helps with petting zoos at special events. Last year, Nicole received the American Legion Award for Citizenship and a \$2,700 scholarship from Donegal High School.

The scholarship accumulates interest until Nicole graduates from high school. She's debating between studying nursing or animal science.

Last year John had the distinction of being a member of the state 4-H livestock judging team that went on to national competition. His 4-H and FFA involvement required him to miss 41 days of school, but he still managed to remain on the honor roll.

After winning at the state level, livestock judging members can not be part of the team the following year. But judging continues to intrigue John. One of his favorite past times is to attend judging events and compile his own list of placings and reasons to compare with the judges' decisions.

John is planning to study animal science but hasn't decided where. He has won numer-

ous awards in FFA and 4-H connected to livestock. Last year he won the \$300 Lancaster Farming Award at the 4-H Roundup.

At the Elizabethtown Fair, John donated \$900 from the proceeds of his hog and lamb toward traveling expenses for the livestock judging team.

In addition to seven Polled Herefords, the family has six sheep, three dogs, three kittens, and the boys have two Angus steers and a number of pigs that they raise for 4-H and FFA projects.

Nicole was selected as princess during the Pennsylvania Farm Show. In preparation for the event, Nicole filled out an application and stated the reasons she believed she was a good candidate for the position. But it wasn't until her name was announced that Nicole knew she

(Turn to Page B3)



## Raising Monarchs Is A Colorful Hobby

GAIL STROCK

Mifflin Cc. Correspondent  
BURNHAM (Mifflin Co.) — "They do get away," smiles Sally Brehm of the beautiful gold, black, and white striped caterpillars in her dining room. She sometimes finds a caterpillar chrysalis, or cocoon, hanging from a drapery, chair, or window edge. It's a small inconvenience for helping to increase the dwindling number of fascinating monarch butterflies.

Sally and her husband, Zeke, of Burnham, Mifflin County, hatch and release 80 to 100 monarch butterflies each summer. They gather the newly hatched caterpillars from their backyard butterfly garden, transfer them to indoor tropical milkweed plants to metamorphose inside their chrysalis, and then release them.

The Brehms' backyard is a butterfly utopia. Butterflies are attracted to the colorful garden by the thirteen yellow, purple, and white butterfly bushes, gloriosa daisies, Queen Anne's Lace, purple cornflowers, milkweed, dill, fennel, bee balm, and joe pye weeds.

"You have to plant for the whole life cycle of the butterfly. They see the colors of the host plants and come in to lay their eggs. Then they need nectaring

plants for food. You plant the plants for the type of butterflies you want."

The Brehms' backyard attracts monarchs, black swallowtails, and spicebush swallowtails. Sally also raises 100 pots of tropical milkweed for caterpillar food.

"The monarchs appear after the Fourth of July. Once we see a female darting around outside, we watch the bed to see if she lays an egg under a leaf. I take yarn and mark the plant and use the same color for each day. The eggs hatch out in four days, and we must bring them (caterpillars the size of a comma) inside because of the ants, spiders, and beetles. I place that piece of leaf on top of a tropical milkweed leaf. Within the next hour, the caterpillar will crawl under the leaf and feed for nine to 13 days. It grows by leaps and bounds."

But this isn't the part where the caterpillar escapes. The caterpillar is too busy eating, growing and excreting (onto layers of newspaper). They never leave the plant.

"After nine to thirteen days, the caterpillars are fat. They come down the plant and go around the rim of the pot, looking for a place to hang. I call this 'stomping around'."

And this is when some caterpillars escape. To help prevent this, Zeke made a large box with screened-in sides to cover the plants. The interesting thing, Sally notes, is that when the caterpillars are searching for a place to hang, they test the site first by hanging upside down and then reaching out in all directions. "It's as if they're trying to see if there's enough room for their wings once they emerge."

Once they find the perfect spot, the caterpillar spins a silk pad at night and then hangs upside down with their head folded up in a J-shape. It's commonly thought that a caterpillar then spins a silk cocoon. Most moths do, but with the monarch caterpillar, its outer layer, or exoskeleton, beings to split near the head and fall away, exposing the beautiful gold/green shell around the pupa. Even though it's motionless at this time, many changes are taking place. After eight to 12 days, a fully formed adult butterfly pushes out from the shell.

"The butterfly must hang and its wings not touch anything. The wings are wet. When they're just about dry, the butterfly will start pumping them for several hours. It's fascinating. I never

(Turn to Page B4)



Sally Brehm adds new plants to her backyard every year in order to attract many different kinds of butterflies. Different flower colors attract a variety of butterflies. Here she is with the colorful Monarch shown in the different stages of growth, from caterpillar to chrysalis.