

Equine Education Program Keeps Ring Busy During Ag Progress Days

MICHELLE KUNJAPPU
Lancaster Farming Staff

ROCKSPRING (Centre Co.) — It's time to head to Rockspring again for the annual display of new agricultural programs, old time farm machinery, education-

al demonstrations, and farm equipment exhibits... otherwise known as Ag Progress Days.

Events in the horse arena during last year's Ag Progress Days included something to pique everyone's interest. From dressage

exhibitions to mounted police presentations, horse handling clinics, and breed profiles, horses took center stage in the arena at the top of Main Street.

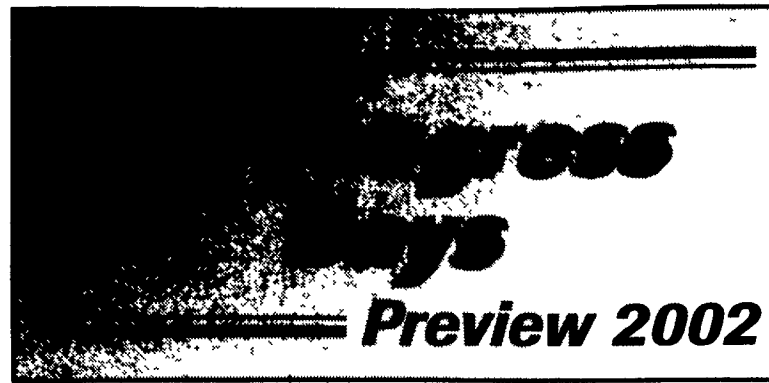
Morgans entered the ring in high style, pulling a carriage driven by Bruce Rappoport, New Bolton Center. The American breed is a natural driving horse, said Rappoport. "They're very willing." Rappoport gave several demonstrations of the animals during Ag Progress Days. He explained the animals' training to compete in driving exhibitions.

The animals not only have to be physically fit but also level-headed and used to noise, confusion, and distractions. Rappoport usually does not take the animals on the same training route twice.

Mounted Police Program

Pennsylvania State Police Cpl. Wade Crimbring and trooper Kenny Brown rode their police horses into the ring to speak to the crowd about the mounted police program.

The program employs three full-time and one part-time troopers. They train the state police horses and riders to serve in Pennsylvania and surrounding states and ride in the events. Besides the trainers, 25 field riders,



Victoria, 7, and Nathan, 8, and their mother, Jodi Lentz, Lebanon, meet Morgan horse "Sammy," held by Tina Higginbottom of the New Bolton Center, where "Sammy," a donated horse, was once a long-term patient.

made up of troopers in various offices in their police departments, ride the 30 horses on detail.

The state police department has utilized horses since 1905, but the herd decreased in size since then. Horsemanship competitions between police troops gave rise to a rodeo/exhibition tour that was used as a recruitment tool until 1976.

Approximately 13 years ago a riding program designed to train horses and riders for a tactical mounted unit began. "Our primary responsibility is crowd control or VIP security," said Crimbring. "We had 19 horses in Washington, D.C. for the inauguration." Additionally, another group of horses will travel to D.C. for a convention this fall.

Demand for the horses has increased from 30 days on detail, or on assignment, to 250 days on detail per year.

All of the animals are donated.

Although requirements are not breed-specific, the animals must have the temperament for the job, be sound, and be large enough (16 hands or taller) to be accepted. "The selection process is strict," said Crimbring.

Trainers have 90 days to decide whether or not to keep the animal, based on the animal's progress in training and personality displayed.

Since the animals are run in a herd, the academy uses only geldings in the program.

Most horses take a year to become "crowd safe," said Crimbring. The training program starts with groundwork such as lunging, then progresses to riding. After a month trainers test the horse's tolerance by introducing a stress or something frightening to the animal and noting their reaction.

"After we see what their usual

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Horse Rides, Field Demos At This Year's Ag Progress

(Continued from Page A1)

educational programs at several other venues. He noted that the riding program at Ag Progress Days will be geared for novices and the general public. Between 400 and 600 people are expected to take the opportunity to ride a horse during the course of the three days.

New field demonstrations scheduled this year will showcase tillage equipment for compacted soils and the latest innovations in herbicide and pesticide sprayers.

To provide opportunity for companies to show off tillage equipment specially designed for working up tight soil, certain areas of the demonstration field will be compacted prior to Ag Progress Days. This will be done by driving heavy equipment on the fields under wet conditions,

Oberheim said. Several companies will then demonstrate their tillage equipment's ability to work this precompacted soil.

Another new demonstration will allow crowds to witness the latest spray technologies for applying herbicides and pesticides. According to Oberheim, at least four or five different companies will be operating their sprayers in the field.

The diverse lineup of machinery scheduled to operate throughout the three days includes bale handlers, ag baggers, forage mixers, and loaders, plus "an assortment of field equipment," Oberheim said.

Altogether, about 350 commercial exhibitors will be on hand. Ag Progress Days also features a host of educational programs provided by public agencies and Penn State University.

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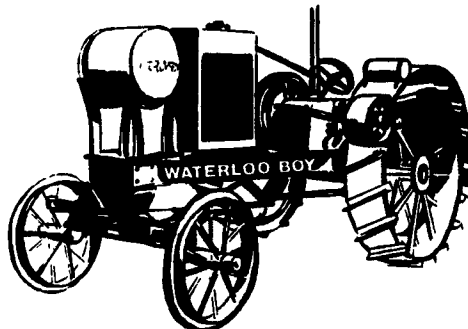
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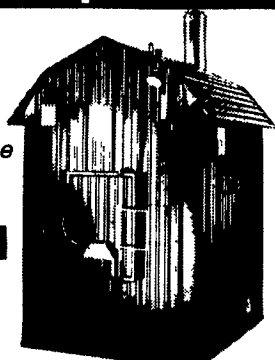
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