

# Ram Test Yields A Winner For Binkley

CONESTOGA (Lancaster Co.) — At 12 years of age, Kelsey Binkley is no stranger to winning: her bedroom features an impressive collection of trophies and blue ribbons dating back to her very first sheep show.

But after four years of continued success, she has discovered that there is still room for surprises.

In April, Kelsey entered her Dorset ram, "Double R" in the annual performance test conducted by the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture and hosted at Penn State University's Livestock Evaluation Center (LEC).

According to Glen Eberly, the director of the LEC, the test is designed primarily to improve the quality of flocks by identifying and certifying the most economically valuable genetic traits. The program is the largest Dorset performance test in the nation.

By eliminating as many environmental and management variables as possible, the test establishes an objective criteria by which to measure the genetic quality of participating sheep.

Once they are entered in the test, all sheep are treated the same for the duration of the 84 day performance test. Throughout the test the sheep are weighed, measured and ultrasonically scanned to evaluate their progress.

The resulting quality index, which offers buyers an objective standard by which to judge their purchase, reflects a range of economically superior genetic traits, including the average weight gain throughout the life of the sheep, the average weight gain during the test, and fat thickness. At the conclusion of the test the sheep are auctioned off for breeding, with sheep being sold to flocks in eight different states.

After three months of dining on cracked corn, rolled oats, and other delights, Double R had munched his way to first place, posting an 83 pound weight gain — an average of just under a pound a day.

"Double R was a fall lamb," noted Eberly, "and his performance was exceptional for a fall lamb."

From the beginning Kelsey knew from the regular updates that her ram had surged into the lead, a position that he never forfeited. But even she was surprised by how well Double R had performed.

"I didn't expect Double R to win," she recalled. "We entered the test to learn about it, so we could be ready to enter other sheep in the future."

"We knew he ate well, and was large, but you never know how much more weight they can gain."

And this seems to be a pattern of Kelsey's sheep showing career.

The Conestoga resident entered her first show at the age of nine, surprising her family and herself by walking home with several blue ribbons. And she hasn't stopped since, having won the supreme champion breed four times, and the grand champion market lamb once.

"My goal," she says with a smile, "is to win at the National Sheep Show in Louisville, Kentucky."

That show is the Super Bowl of sheep competition, so this is no small ambition, requiring training and steady improvement. Winning requires a combination of skill, knowledge, position, poise and appearance.

Contestants must also learn to recognize and respond to the individual preferences and style of the judges.

Even though tending her flock takes a lot of time and effort, especially when fair season is full swing, Kelsey finds time to devote to other interests. A homeschooled in the seventh grade, she divides her time between school work, 4-H meetings and events, piano and violin lessons, and is active in her church youth group and the Hempfield Homeschool Group.

Her long term plans are to raise sheep to show and sell. But it doesn't stop there: she has decided she likes pigs.

"They're easier to prep for shows," she observed.



Kelsey Binkley with Double R, agriculture secretary Samuel Hayes, and Lauren Ferringer, the Pennsylvania Lamb and Wool Queen.

## Penn State Report Focuses On Pa. Nutrient Management Policy

UNIVERSITY PARK (Centre Co.) — Are you aware that Pennsylvania's Nutrient Management Act policies are under review?

As the State Conservation Commission considers changes in state nutrient management rules, researchers in Penn State's Col-

lege of Agricultural Sciences have issued a report that will help citizens and public decision-makers deliberate the issues, options and future policy directions for nutrient management in the Commonwealth.

The report, "Nutrient Manage-

ment Policy: Pennsylvania Stakeholders' Views About Progress, Challenges, and Future Directions," was written by Charles Abdalla, associate professor of agricultural economics, and Alysia Dodd, extension associate in agricultural environmental policy.

"This is the first major review of Pennsylvania's Nutrient Management Act regulations, since the rules were implemented in 1997," Dodd said. "While detailed proposals for regulatory

changes are not known at this time, it is important for farmers and others who will be affected by the changes to stay informed about the discussions taking place at the state level and actively participate in the deliberations when opportunities arise."

"The publication is based on information collected from 28 interviews with knowledgeable people from an array of agencies and organizations," Abdalla said. "Our goal was to identify perspectives about critical nutrient management issues in the Commonwealth and provide a report that contributes to more in-

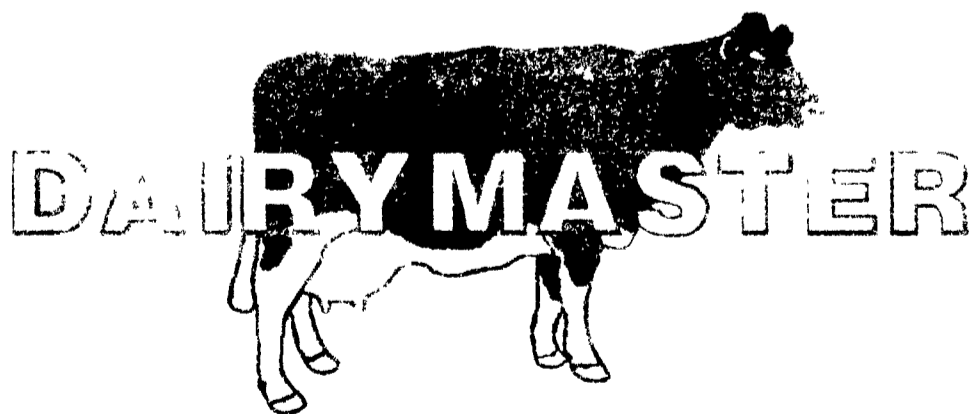
formed discussions and policy decisions."

"Audiences that will find the report useful include people involved in animal agriculture, such as farmers, agribusiness, and related businesses, rural residents, public decision-makers and elected officials, and anyone interested in water quality and the environment," Abdalla says.

The report is available on the Penn State Nutrient and Water Policy Update Web site at <http://agenvpolicy.aers.psu.edu>. The report is also available from Dr. Abdalla at (814) 865-2562.



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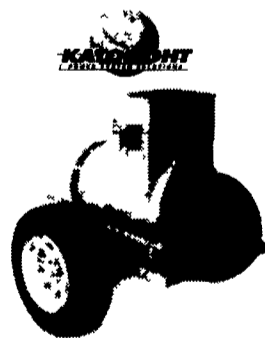


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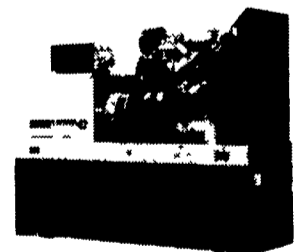
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