

Highland Cattle

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junction with the National Western Stock Show in Denver, Colo., each January.

John Chatkowski of Elmira, N.Y., who has attended the Mercer show since its beginning, brought four animals this year. He contemplated this being the last single-breed show supported by the American Highland Cattle Association.

“At first, I wasn’t too happy about the decision of the national organization, but as I thought about it, I could see why they made the decision,” Chatkowski said. “One of the reasons we show is to introduce Highlands to the public, but a show like this doesn’t attract many people.

“We can see each other at other shows like KILE (Keystone International Livestock Exposition) or Denver,” he said.

There are a lot of people who attend the larger shows that feature many other breeds.

Over the years, participants have traveled many miles to exhibit their cattle at the Mercer show.

The girls from Wurzbach Farm in York County, Pa., all started their showing careers at the Mercer show.

Abby, 12, has been showing since she was 3 and her sister Mary, 16, has been showing for about 11 years. Their cousin Emma Marks, 16, rounded out the group.

They were showing 6-month-old Highlands and knew the ropes about getting them ready.

But everything doesn’t always go as planned, as Marks found out.



Photos by Carol Ann Gregg

Marjie Hartz of Middletown, Pa., prepares to show her Highland cattle for the first time.

As she was leading her heifer, Millie, through the mud puddles left from the 4 inches of rain that had fallen on the Mercer area, she slipped, got covered in mud and lost hold of Millie’s lead rope.

Never fear, Millie just moseyed to the wash rack where she was quickly corralled and taken back to the barn.

Marks changed her shirt and continued on to help get the rest of the string ready for the show as if nothing had happened.

The girls keep their cattle on their grandparents’ farm. Marks said that at one time they had about 30 head of Highlands there, but as they are downsizing they have eight head this year.

Another Pennsylvania exhibitor, Marjie Hartz of H&H Cattle in Middletown, was feeling the excitement of her first Highland show.

Hartz had sold the gift shop that she had operated on her family’s farm for 14 years.

“Instead of using the money to buy a sports car or a boat, I used the money to buy Highland cattle,” she said.

As she groomed her cows, she recalled that she hadn’t shown cattle since she was in 4-H 40 years ago.

Her husband, Chet, said he enjoyed watching her as she was relishing everything about getting ready for the show.

They had set up a table of snacks in the aisle that was decorated with a tablecloth and flowers. There were bowls of strawberries, blackberries and raspberries, and bags of chips to entice visitors to stop by and talk a spell.

“This is what it is all about,” Chet Hartz said as he pointed to the other exhibitors. “It’s not about the win-

ning, but about getting to be with friends — other farmers — and having a good time.”

Another exhibitor, who makes the annual trip to Denver in January, was Eddie Mackay of Michigan. He and his friend Rick Milliman had been to the Mercer show several times.

Mackay was showing Highland cattle because Milliman thought it only fitting that a person who was raised in Scotland should own Highland cattle.

“I worked on a farm in Scotland so that I could become an engineer,” Mackay said. His training was as an aeronautical engineer but he spent his 34-year career designing trucks.

“I worked as an engineer so that I could farm,” Mackay said with a broad smile. He has about 30 Cheviot ewes and 43 Highland cattle on his Dundonald Farm, which is named for his village in Scotland. He immigrated to the United States in 1957.

Jon Haltowski brought a string of cattle from Cobblestone Farm, which has been raising Highlands since 1997 in East Troy, Wis.

“The trip really didn’t seem that long,” Haltowski said. “Maybe because I am excited to be here. This is my first time at this show.”

His cattle had settled in and were comfortably resting in their stalls awaiting the show. Haltowski has been working at Cobblestone for four years and said he enjoys having a job where he can work outside and with animals.

Highland association members followed the show with a last hurrah celebration called the “Beast Feast,” where they shared memories of past shows over great food.



Emma Marks, 16, ties up Millie, her 6-month-old Highland heifer.



John Chatkowski of Elmira, N.Y., washes his bull. He has participated in the Mid-Atlantic Highland Association show since the beginning.



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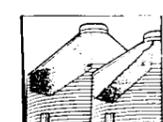
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