

# 'This little piggy went to market...' Dresden woman fulfills reputation with adopted pig

**By Carolyn Plotts**  
*c.plotts@nwkansas.com*  
 This little piggy went to market. Oh, no she didn't! Not April Maye, the pet pig of Jacque Douglas of Dresden.

April Maye is not just any pig. After she fell out of the back of a hog transport when she was just a wee piglet, April Maye had the good fortune to be rescued by Kathy Nauer of Jennings. Nauer knew she couldn't raise the little porker, but she knew who could.

Ms. Douglas, the relief postmaster in Jennings, has a reputation for being an animal rescuer. The Dresden home of Ms. Douglas and Allan Hill, transplants from eastern Kansas, has a mini-menagerie that includes "fainting" goats, ducks, dogs of all breeds and sizes, bantam chickens, white silkie chickens, cats, pygmy goats, a regular goat, a pet mouse and, of course, April Maye, the hog.

You shouldn't say "hog" too loudly, though, because April Maye doesn't know she is a pig. Weighing less than 10 pounds when she first came under Ms. Douglas' care, April Maye lived in a big wooden box kept on the back porch. Thriving on calf milk replacement, she soon weighed 20 pounds and was moved to a fenced-in area in the back yard. Ms. Douglas said all she had to do was whistle, and April Maye would come running.

She was good about staying close to Ms. Douglas when she was out of the pen, so April Maye followed her to the front yard one day. There she discovered new territory. Ms. Douglas said they were afraid she might get away, but April never left the yard. Still, that was the last time she was allowed in the front.

Once when April Maye weighed about 45 pounds,

she was standing by an ant hill in the back yard. Mr. Hill said all of a sudden April Maye started squealing and running around the yard, dragging one of her legs.

"Jacque started yelling 'Come quick. April's pulled a 'hammie,'" he recalled. "She wasn't hurt. She just got bit by an ant. She would calm down, then, I guess, she'd get bit again and off she'd go."

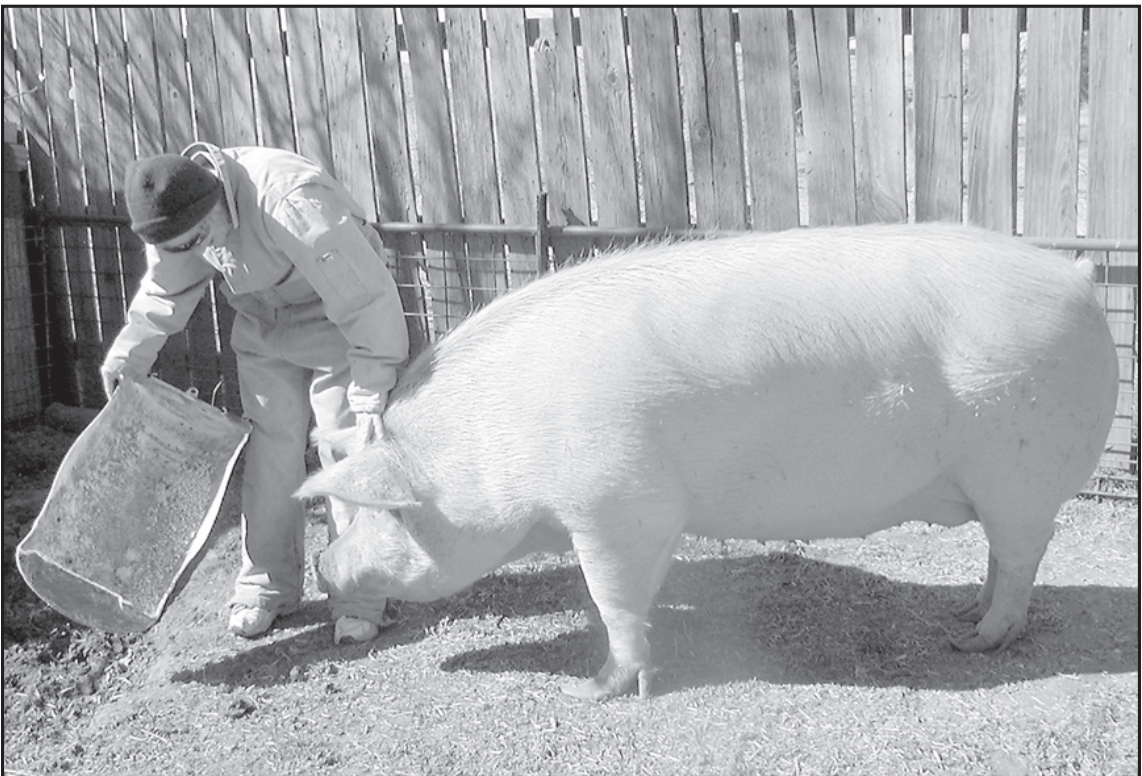
Apicky eater, April Maye liked her milk and didn't want to give it up. After she turned her nose, or rather snout, up at pig pellets, Ms. Douglas said, they tried to get April Maye to eat them by mixing them with milk. She finally weaned her by watering down her food so much she didn't like it. From there, April Maye's conversion to a diet of whole corn and dog food was easy.

Ms. Douglas said she started her on ear corn. One of April Maye's little quirks was to eat the cob clean, then pile her "empties" up in a corner of her pen. She pulled the same trick with her food dishes. Ms. Douglas said April would stack the dishes, smallest to largest in the corner, ready to be washed. A good housekeeper, by hog standards at least, April Maye has made a comfortable wallowing hole in her pen and keeps her trough slicked clean.

That might explain her portly physique. By all estimates, April Maye, now almost 2, tips the scales at a whopping 700 pounds.

Ms. Douglas said she would like to get April Maye weighed but she doesn't have a trailer and walking her hog the two blocks to the Co-op scales doesn't seem like an option.

"What would I do if she decided she didn't want to go there?" said Ms. Douglas. "She's got a good disposition, but I don't want to take that chance."



Jacque Douglas of Dresden cares for April Maye, the pig Douglas adopted as a small piglet. Douglas has raised April Maye since the piglet was rescued after falling from the back of a transport truck. April Maye now weighs in at nearly 700 pounds and is a loyal pet.

—Photo courtesy of Carolyn Plotts

Asked if they ever eat any of the animals they raise, Ms. Douglas said, "Oh, my no! I couldn't eat somebody I named."

So it looks like April Maye can live out her years with no cares or concerns. Except maybe who will scratch her back and when supper will be served.

## More farmers are converting crop land Terrace maintenance: always time well spent

*Courtesy of Norton County Conservation District*

Throughout the Midwest a definite trend has been developing over the last several years. The number of acres of rangeland and odd areas being broke out and converted to cropland is steadily increasing and in Norton County, there is no exception. In many cases, these are marginal at best and require extensive conservation practices to maintain their productivity.

The high and increasing value of our agricultural land is putting extreme pressure on this conversion. The idea behind this is higher rate of return from the cropland. However, this is not always true.

A large percentage of this grassland which is now being broke is classified as Class IV

land. This classification is due to extreme slopes or highly erosive soils where acceptable amounts of soil loss cannot be met.

Pushing down grass banks in our cropland fields to gain that extra acre of cropland has become almost an acceptable practice. Acres of range best suited for grassland are continually being broken out and farmed. It is almost impossible to apply a farmable terrace system on some of this acreage.

Norton County boasts of being the "Pheasant Capital of the World" and rightly so. Winter cover and ample resting areas are the reason. However, it doesn't take a wildlife biologist to predict the trend our pheasant population will take if this conversion from grassland to cropland continues.

The decision a farmer ultimately makes

to farm that rough pasture or leave it in rangeland rests with his own goals and how his operation is set up. If the alternatives are weighed objectively, he may find himself economically better off harvesting pounds of beef than trying for bushels of wheat or corn.

We all must realize that good sound conservation in the long run pays the higher rate of return. Trends such as these show that maybe we aren't considering all the facts in some of the things we do. We must consider all the alternatives before making the decision of converting grassland into cropland.

For more information and help with considering all alternative conservation practices contact the Norton County Conservation District and Norton County NRCS.

*Courtesy of Norton County Conservation District*

Throughout Norton County there are hundreds of miles of terraces; some in fairly good shape and some barely distinguishable. This could be due to how long ago they were established, but also how well they are maintained.

Time spent on terrace maintenance is well justified. Not just by maintaining a ridge, but also the cost of a major rebuilding may be avoided altogether.

Terrace maintenance programs should be a part of the spring or fall, whichever is most convenient. If terrace ridges are plowed up, this would more than double the life span of the terrace ridges. Through years of maintenance, they can be gradually formed to fit your size of machinery better.

Terrace maintenance is well worth the time and effort. Make it as much a part of your yearly farm activities as going to see your banker.

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