

Support the Junior Livestock Auction

by Mary Silveira

The Junior Livestock Auction at the California Mid-State Fair continues to be one of the “strongest in the entire state of California,” said Chief Executive Officer Vivian Robertson, immediately after fair figures went public in August 2008. Robertson added that she was proud of the fair’s junior livestock program and the way the community continues to support the kids year after year.

KSBY reported that fair representatives said almost \$1.5 million was spent to help out the 4-H and FFA and other students who spent hundreds of hours raising the steers, rabbits, chickens and heifers, lambs and pigs that were sold. That was last year.

Over the years, schools throughout the San Luis Obispo County and leaders throughout communities devote precious hours instructing youth on how to feed, bed, train, groom and lead these animals to their ultimate goal. Money paid to

these students is part of their learning how to earn a living in, not only the agriculture world, but in any career they choose. Money from these sales helps students save for furthering their education or purchasing much needed equipment to improve that education.

This year can be a lot better for this program if those who support youth come together to make it happen. The San Luis Obispo County Farm Bureau seeks to increase its donations this year with an all-out effort to bring attention to the event and bring recognition to agriculture and educate those who have been remiss in its support.

Put on by the California Mid-State Fair, the auction has always been encouraged by UC Cooperative Extension, which supports the 4-H program. UC Cooperative Extension Youth Development Advisor Richard Enfield affirms that the San Luis Obispo County 4-H is one of the largest in the nation with more than 1500 youth participants and 450 volunteers. The volunteers are representatives of the university, and all have background checks and training in order to qualify.

Julie Maggiore, administrative assistant to the department, added that the first 4-H club was founded in 1902 on the East Coast. Since then, more than 60 million people across America have been 4-H members. There are currently 30 4-H clubs in SLO County, and members may participate in either the Mid-State or Santa Barbara County fairs, depending on the school district in which they reside.

“The youth are developing important life skills such as personal responsibility, money management, decision making and self-discipline,” Maggiore says. “Youth learn how to create a project budget and make sound financial decision so that they can, we hope, sell their animal for a profit. Members frequently choose to reinvest their profit in next year’s project or start a breeding program. Many 4-Hers have saved for their college education through their participation in the Junior Livestock Auction.”

Maggiore continues, “In times of economic uncertainty, it’s important to remember that an investment in the Junior Livestock Auction is an investment in our future. Purchasing a 4-H project animal supports an experience that helps youth to develop into responsible, caring citizens and effective leaders.”

Contributing to the same purposes of the program, California Mid-State Fair Livestock Superintendent JoAnn Switzer says the participants need to be rewarded for their hard work and dedication. They learn responsibility, caring and team work as well as banking, record keeping and seeing the expenses and the hoped-for income.

“It is a beautiful thing that many of those who have gone through the program come back and buy from the next generation at the Junior Livestock Auction,” Switzer says.

This year’s auction is Saturday, August 1; the Replacement Heifer auction is held the night before, on Friday, July 31. These events occur in the Livestock Pavilion.



Cactus Harris, president of Ranchita Canyon 4-H Club.

"If someone wants to add to the bids for specific animals, they only need to come to the Livestock Office and ask for an Add-on Sheet," says Switzer.

For only \$100 minimum, you, too, can help the student. Sometimes groups come together to ADD ON. For instance if a 4-Her has a lamb and someone wants to help with the profits for that student, the \$100 or more that is signed for on the Add-On Sheet is 'added' to the check sent to the student.

"These students learn, sometimes without even knowing they are learning, because they are involved with a project that will sell and make money for their future education," Switzer says.

Dick Nock, of Nock Trading Company and a member of the San Luis Obispo County Cattlemen's Association, was part of the Templeton Livestock Company when they first were approached to help the Mid-State Fair with auctioneering of hogs, sheep and steers. "Then, those were the only animals that went through the auction," he remembers.

In 1970 Nock and the Cattlemen formed the Junior Livestock Support Club when 15 or 20 people got together and put in \$200 apiece to help "bottom the sale" for the students. "We'd find out from the instructors and leaders of the kids what they had to pay and what it cost to bring their project to the fair—the bottom line," Nock says. The support isn't for the animals, "It's for the kids."

The Cattlemen participate with funding the Replacement Heifer Sale, the Steer Sale and the barbecue for the Carcass Class. Replacement heifer's are purchased to go to commercial herds, the steers are sold to go to market, and the market steers at the



Maggie Boneso shows off her cleaned-up Black Crossbred, named DABU.

fair are required to enter the Carcass Class (except those that do not qualify—noted in the 2009 Competition Handbook). This class was started by the Cattlemen to introduce the role that U.S.D.A. grading plays and the mechanics of applying certain principles in buying, raising and marketing beef. The winner is based on the grade of the animal.

"Our junior livestock program remains one of the strongest in the entire state of California, and our community continues to generously support the kids year after year," Switzer says. "Of course, the soft economy trickles down and does have an effect on everybody."

Maggie Boneso, Ranchita Canyon 4-Her, is raising DABU, a 1200-plus pound Black Crossbred. This is Boneso's sixth year showing. A freshman, she has had her steer since November. Her daily routine 60 days before the fair is blowing him and then rinsing him with water twice a day and combing his hair. Prior to the show, she will clip him and poof up the tail. Appearances are just as

important as showing. "I do it just because I love cattle," Boneso says. "If you want to make money, this isn't the job." What she has garnered from her years of experience is "work ethic," her mother Maryann says.

"It takes a lot of dedication to be competitive," Maggie adds, then says, "and a little confidence. You are in the ring by yourself."

To recruit bidders, she and all 4-Hers send a picture of their project animal and a letter introducing themselves and telling a little of what is done with the animal, and of course the date of the sale. Boneso's steer weighs approximately 1280 pounds, the maximum is 1400, and the lowest is 1100 to qualify. With feed and purchase of the steer, she already has a lot invested.

It appears to be all business with senior Cactus Harris, president of the Ranchita Canyon Club. He started in the Estrella Club when he was in the eighth grade. He has always shown hogs. "Hogs are more money makers," Harris claims,

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Anthony Falcone and his barking pig "Valentine," aka FIDO.

adding, "I pay off my debt and then a little bit goes into my college fund."

Harris got his hog in April. He believes in not getting the animal too soon. The requirement for competition is that all market hogs must have been pre-entered, verifying 60-day ownership with the fair office prior to June 1.

"It's important to get them used to you as they get older so you grow with them. If you get them too soon, you have to hold back on the feed as you get closer to the show. Maximum weight for a hog is 275 pounds.

"Some years I had my hog shipped out from Nebraska," Harris says. "This year I found him in Yuba City, California." Asked why he chose hogs to show, Harris replies, "Hogs are a big-time growing industry. I thought I would try it. My father (Tom Harris) showed hogs in FFA."

His mother, Debby Harris, said she was a swine herdsman when she attended L. A. Pierce College.

There are obstacles to overcome in getting the animals ready to show. Hogs can get pneumonia easily, heat stress, sunburn and cracked hooves. But, all they need is to be kept cool, watered and fed, and, of course, you can tell from the pictures of teens and their animals, they need a little bonding with their owner. All animals are susceptible to illness and that is the risk the investor takes when preparing their animal for the fair.

Anthony Falcone, 15, is a student at Templeton High School and in 4-H with the Creston 4-H Club. Anthony is raising a pig to show. "I have been showing market hogs for five years now," he says. "Over the period I own the hog, I spend an average of an hour a day, and I will have owned this hog for around 120 days."

Falcone says on average it takes around \$800 for him to bring the animal to market. As to benefits of raising an animal for the fair, he says, "It is a great way to learn responsibility, accountability and business. Also, if you have had contact with a good buyer—and you have done a good job raising an animal—you will make a good profit.

"I have a project to gain the experience of bonding with an animal, learning responsibility and building up my savings account for college," Falcone continues. "I have learned from the mistakes I've made from my previous years of showing hogs, applying the corrections to this year's project, and so far it has been going well. I have also started a breeding project and hope to raise my own hog to show at the fair.

"You can work hard, or not even try, but livestock requires dedication. My pig, Valentine, who I personally think is the best pig I've ever had, barks like a little dog! Hence, her nickname, FIDO," Falcone says.

In order to get bidders to the auction, Falcone, like the other participants, writes letters to entice bidders to come to the fair and bid on his animal.

Wanting to help youth, in 2008 the SLO Farm Bureau took part in the Add-On program rather than buy any animals.

"With the help of the fair, we identified sellers who sold below what it should take for the seller to make a modest profit and bumped the sale price," says Paul Clark, past president of San Luis Obispo County Farm Bureau. "We only solicited funds from board members and the executive committee at this time. "In 2007, we did purchase an animal or two, and we also bumped, or added on.

"In 2009, we hope to raise funds from the FB board and officers—**AND** our membership—to essentially form another support club similar to the other club support groups and the support group that Dick Nock organized over the years," Clark says. "With the economy, this could be a down year for exhibitors at the fair, and so every little bit that FB members can contribute will be appreciated."

Please see the donation form on page 11 to support the Junior Livestock Auction.



Dick Nock and the Cattlemen formed the Junior Livestock Support Group in 1970 and still continue to help with time and monetary support for the Junior Livestock Auction.

For those of you who wish to join Farm Bureau in helping applaud the youth who grow in learning and leadership to become our future, please complete the form at right and return it to Farm Bureau so your name can be added to the list of contributors of the Farm Bureau Support Club.



SUPPORT JUNIOR LIVESTOCK AUCTION

Please make your check payable to SLO County Farm Bureau; Memo: Livestock Auction Support Club.

*Amount: \$ _____

This amount will be added to the Support Club Fund

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____

State: _____

Telephone: _____

E-mail, if desired: _____

*Your contribution is not tax deductible.

What Do Youth Learn by Raising Beef Replacement Heifers?

(Excerpts from the *California Mid-State Fair Beef-Replacement Heifer 2009 Manual*)

Raising a beef replacement heifer gives 4-H and FFA youth an opportunity to expand their knowledge in a breeding project related to commercial cattle production. Because of the difference between raising breeding heifers and market steers, this 2009 manual and several publications are recommended reading for anyone planning to raise or supervise a heifer project.

Objectives of the Beef Replacement Heifer Project

1. To learn the basic management practices of the beef cattle breeding enterprise.
2. To learn the economics of raising a beef replacement heifers.
3. To select and raise heifers that will meet the requirements of local commercial range cattle producers and upgrade their herds.

Breeding

The rules for this project specify that heifers must be bred

to calve between September 1 and December 1 following the Fair. Assuming a nine-month gestation period, the heifer should be bred no later than March 1, and preferably, by January 15. By calving in September or early October, heifers should have enough time to cycle for their second breeding season.

Replacement Heifer Sale

An exhibitor may not show or sell more than one beef replacement heifer at the Fair per year. Only those heifers placing in the top two groups will be eligible to sell. If a heifer calves during the Fair and has qualified for the sale, she will be eligible to be sold with the calf by her side, provided that the calf is healthy and the heifer is controllable. The decision will be made by Management.

More Information

For a complete guide to the Replacement Heifer Project, refer to the official California Mid-State Fair Beef-Replacement Heifer 2009 Manual online: http://www.midstatefair.com/images/cms/files/230329_RH-2009-Manual.pdf.