

Youth Livestock Projects Teach Life Skills

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With county fair season behind us, it may appear youth livestock exhibitors in the Southwind District may have wrapped up their livestock projects for 2020. However, many are still working at home to prepare for the Kansas State Fair and Kansas Junior Livestock Show – which are still options to them despite the many event cancellations across the country. Not only are they practicing to drive their hogs, brace their sheep and goats and set up their cattle, they are working hard to keep them cool and on feed while managing summer temperatures and navigating a back-to-school schedule.

Lots of Southwind District 4-H members sold animals at their livestock premium sales, knowing they still had work to do at home. Youth who exhibit cattle care for and own their animals for about 280 days, and youth with sheep, meat goats and hogs care for and own their livestock for about 130 days. The time spent with animals teaches basic life skills and eventually help them develop into better citizens.

Following are some life skills that youth livestock project members can gain:

1. How to get along with people. A large number of people in society quit or lose their jobs because they cannot get along with others. 4-H members who show livestock are around people they have never met but have similar interests. They learn to communicate with these people.
2. Sportsmanship. At a livestock show, there is only one Grand Champion. However, there are many winners. Most 4-H members who show livestock for any period of time usually experience the extreme high feeling of an exceptional effort and the extreme disappointment of a project that didn't turn out as well as was expected. Normally, win or lose, the competitors in the show can be seen after the show talking and enjoying life together.
3. Responsibility. Feeding and daily chores in a 4-H livestock project teach responsibility. Top feeders follow the time clock in their daily efforts. This is a good habit to start at a young age and may reap youngster's substantial benefits in a career later in their lives.
4. Attend to details. Most young people take care of major items in a 4-H livestock project

like fencing, feeding, etc. However many times it's the little things that make a difference: keeping water tanks and feed troughs clean, working on grooming and showmanship several months before the show, keeping pens clean and close observation for sickness and disease. Paying attention to details is beneficial in almost everything we do in life.

5. Decision making. Decision making is never easy at any point in our lives. 4-H livestock projects require several key decisions be made: selection of project animals, selection of feeding method, care and management decisions, fitting and grooming techniques, etc.

6. Goal setting. For every successful 4-H livestock project, there is usually a good plan. Most details and plans for the project on selection, feeding and management of the project have been planned well in advance. Goal setting is important for everyone regardless of future endeavors.

Next time you are at a livestock show, study the kids instead of the animals. Their 2020 projects may be far more diverse and advanced than the few animals taken to the County Fair, and plans are already underway to purchase stock for 2021 when we can hopefully return to normal.

For full results of your local County Fair in the Southwind District, visit www.Southwind.k-state.edu