

UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA-LINCOLN

Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources (<http://ianr.unl.edu>)

NEBRASKA 4-H

State Fair Blow and Go Show Announcement

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 12, 2016

In a joint decision made by State Fair, FFA and 4-H, with regard to fitting of livestock at the fair, 2016 shows will be Blow and Go, which primarily affects the way exhibitors prepare their beef animals.

We certainly understand and respect those folks who are passionate about fitting their animals, the added level of competition it presents and the added level of skill and learning required to fit an animal successfully. But here is some context as to why this decision was made.

As many of you know, the beef barn is always a challenge for space and safety, particularly having enough space for blocking chutes and fitting. The last few years, we have been able to manage these challenges using space on the west end of the swine barn for fitting and blocking chutes. However, that space will not be available moving forward. In 2015, we had the highest number of entries that we have had since I have been a part of the fair with 1080 head of cattle entered. The barn only has stalling space for 1220 head, not to mention tack, feed and other supplies. So we are physically maxed out on space. Ultimately, we came down to two options in terms of how to better manage the available space. We either substantially reduce entry limits and exhibitors' opportunities to participate in the beef show, or we limit the equipment exhibitors bring to the fair. We decided to go with the second option and therefore a no fit show.

As you can imagine, we heard feedback on both sides of the issue as we looked at the options. I certainly understand the frustration some exhibitors and families will feel as a result. However, a few other positives that we hope can be gleaned from this change include a reduction in the cost of supplies and products spent on preparing the animals to show. It will also help speed up the loading and unloading process. After discussing with show officials from other state fairs who have gone this way, they believe the quality of the livestock exhibited at their shows has increased because they can no longer fit the flaws out of their animals.

This is not a plan to eliminate blocking chutes for beef altogether. The number of chute tags given out will be more limited than in past years, but the need for the chutes will also be less than in past years. Some families, chapters or counties may choose not bring blocking chutes, but for safety reasons, we do want that tool to be available.

Thank you for your help in communicating this with your families.

Recommended guidelines will follow soon.

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