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SHOWING LIVESTOCK BENEFITS YOUTH

It seems far too often we place too much emphasis on winning and losing at County Fair, State Fair, Ak-Sar-Ben or other Junior livestock shows. Unfortunately, many times adults consider 4-H livestock projects a failure if their son or daughter does not win. If our only goal at a livestock show is to win, maybe we need to make some adjustments in our goals and in understanding the benefits our youth are gaining from livestock shows.

Ideally, 4-H and FFA livestock projects should be a family affair. If the right percentages of time and energy are spent by youngsters and parents together, these projects can help our young people learn the basic life skills and eventually help them develop into better citizens. If the percentage gets out of hand, we see a group of kids whose parents are sore if they don't win, constantly placing the blame on the judge.

Very few 4-H and FFA livestock projects are economically sound. However, neither are having children, paying for band or sports camps, etc. If a parent's goal is for the child to make money, investing in a savings account is less risky than investing in a 4-H and FFA livestock project. However, if a parent's goal is to invest in the future and to help their son or daughter develop as a person, learn responsibility, set goals and gain some knowledge about livestock production, then 4-H and FFA livestock projects are good investments.

Most likely we will have livestock shows as long as there are youngsters who have parents and grandparents. However, let's keep these shows in proper perspective. They are not beef shows, swine shows and sheep shows but they are for the kids. The animal is simply the ticket for the youngster to take part.

4-H and FFA livestock projects are one of the oldest and greatest teaching tools that we have to teach youth life skills. Life skills include how to get along with others that have similar interests and learning communication. How many people in society quit or lose jobs because they cannot get along with others?

There is only one grand champion so it is not uncommon to see sportsmanship in 4-H. 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 youth in the show ring can be seen after the show talking and enjoying life together.

Feeding and daily chores in 4-H livestock projects 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. Getting along and communicating with others, sportsmanship and responsibility can all be observed this week at the Saline County Fair. Please attend and support our area youth.



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