

Is an ailing economy thinning the herd? Officials say fewer kids are entering animals in events

By Lillian Mongeau / *The Bulletin*

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REDMOND —

There were fewer hogs than usual in the FFA Swine Showmanship Competition on Thursday morning. The event was followed by the 4-H version of the same competition and that contest was also smaller than last year.

“It's the economy, I would say, across the board,” Candi Bothum, a program coordinator for Deschutes County's 4-H Program, said. “I think (families are) unable to provide for the animals, and there's splitting up of families to get jobs, and kids getting real jobs in the summer to help with expenses.”

Bothum said 4-H animal submissions and member enrollment were down almost 20 percent this year, and Debbie Bartholomew, an FFA volunteer, said its animal submissions were down as well. The smaller field didn't lower the level of competition Thursday morning though, according to Brett Kaysen, a visiting judge from Colorado State University.

“For the size of this county fair, it's as competitive as any in the U.S.,” Kaysen said after judging the FFA contestants. He stayed on to judge the 4-H showmen and said he was impressed with the positive attitude and camaraderie of both groups.

“(There are) a lot of talented showmen here,” Kaysen said.

The goal of showing a hog is to maintain eye contact with the judge, while keeping control of the animal.

Showmen use 3-foot-long sticks to drive their hogs back and fourth across the show ring, slapping them near the ears and sometimes on the hindquarters.



Ryan Brennecke / The Bulletin

Karlee Markham works on maneuvering her pig around the ring during the advanced FAA Swine Showmanship competition Thursday at the Deschutes County Fair in Redmond.



Ryan Brennecke / The Bulletin

Kaysen, who said he judges about 20 such contests throughout the year, gave personal comments to each contestant, citing their intensity, calm and control of their animals. He also gave tips on aspects the teen showmen could do better, like grooming their animals or keeping them away from the fences.

Karlee Markham, 17, showed her pig, Big Mike, to win the title of grand champion in the FFA contest Thursday. She said after the show that she felt she'd done well, but planned to work on driving her animal a little faster next time.

"I just prepared the hog as best I could and kept him as happy as I could," Karlee said, who has shown animals since fourth grade. "I love how competitive it can be but how fun it is at the same time. Pigs are just like dogs. They all have their own personalities."

As Thursday's grand champion, Karlee is one step closer to the title of "FFA Master Showman," which she will compete for Saturday morning. In addition to showing Big Mike, she will have to show a cow, a sheep and a goat. Though the goal may be to be a master showman, it is only one part of what can be learned from showing an animal, Bartholomew said. Teens also learn leadership skills and responsibility, she said.

"It builds their confidence," Bartholomew said. "They're ready to take on the world, and they're not afraid to pursue their goals."

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Ryan Brennecke / The Bulletin

Karlee Markham keeps eye contact with the judge while competing in the advanced FAA Swine Showmanship competition with Rebekah Porter, left, and Kelsey Dixon on Thursday at the Deschutes County Fair.

If you go

DESCHUTES COUNTY FAIR

What: Rides, agricultural exhibits, food, games and more.

When: Friday and Saturday, 10 a.m.-11 p.m.; Sunday, 10 a.m.-5 p.m.; Carnival opens at 11 a.m. every day.

Where: Deschutes County Fair & Expo Center, 3800 S.W. Airport Way, Redmond

Cost: \$9 adults, \$6 ages 6-12, \$6 ages 62 and older, free for ages 5 and younger

Contact: 541-548-2711 or www.expo.deschutes.org.

Free shuttle

Shuttles are free and the last shuttles leave the fair 30 minutes after closing to return to all three locations. For

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more information call 541-548-2711 or visit www.deschutes.org/fair.

Shuttles leave:
Mountain View High School in Bend every half hour from 9:30 a.m. to 11 p.m.
Redmond High School every hour from 9:30 a.m. to 10:30 p.m.
Sisters Elementary School every two hours from 9:30 a.m. to 9:30 p.m.

Deschutes County fair schedule
8:30 a.m. FFA Breeding Swine, Swine Ring, followed by 4-H
9 a.m. Open Class Cavies Judging, Small Animal Barn followed by 4-H; Open Class Rabbit judging
9:30 am Open Class Dairy Goat Judging, Dairy Ring
10 a.m. FFA Breeding Beef, Beef Ring
12 p.m. Jalapeno Eating Contest, The Bulletin Family Fun Zone Stage
1 p.m. FFA Sheep Showmanship, Sheep Ring; FFA Special Fair Award/Scholarship Interviews; Hula Hoop Dance Party, The Bulletin Family Fun Zone Field; U-Turn, Eberhards/Verizon Food Court Stage
1:45 p.m. Jackie Barrett, Eberhards/Verizon Food Court Stage
2 p.m. Three-Legged and Sack Races, The Bulletin Family Fun Zone Field
2:30 p.m. U-Turn, Eberhards/Verizon Food Court Stage
3 p.m. Cupcake Walk, The Bulletin Family Fun Zone Stage
3:15 p.m. Kylan Johnson, Eberhards/Verizon Food Court Stage
4 p.m. FFA Floral Arranging Contest, in front of Sheep Barn; Jackie Barrett, Eberhards/Verizon Food Court Stage
4:45 p.m. Kylan Johnson, Eberhards/Verizon Food Court Stage
5 p.m. Open Class Sheep Judging, Meat Breeds, Sheep ring; Hula Hoop Contest, The Bulletin Family Fun Zone Field
5:30 p.m. Sign-up for Mutton Busting Contest; Natalie Carter, Eberhards/Verizon Food Court Stage; Tammy Barton (Hypnotist), Employment Source Center Circle Stage
6 p.m. Rodeo Preshow; Sheep Scramble & Pig Races, The Bulletin Family Fun Zone Field
6:15 p.m. Box Car String Band, Eberhards/Verizon Food Court Stage
7 p.m. Deschutes County Rodeo, Rodeo Arena; Styx

Concert, Event Center; Limbo, The Bulletin Family Fun Zone Field

7:15 p.m. Hokulea, Employment Source Center Circle Stage

7:30 p.m. Haley Jordan, Eberhards/Verizon Food Court Stage

8 p.m. Elephant in China Shop, The Bulletin Family Fun Zone Stage

8:15 p.m. Natalie Carter, Eberhards/Verizon Food Court Stage

8:30 p.m. Tammy Barton (Hypnotist), Employment Source Center Circle Stage

9 p.m. Haley Jordan, Eberhards/Verizon Food Court Stage

9:45 p.m. Box Car String Band, Eberhards/Verizon Food Court Stage

On the Web

For video from the fair, visit www.bendbulletin.com/fair.