

The 2017 Polk County Fair was a three-day extravaganza filled with thrills, tasty treats and family-friendly entertainment.



EMILY MENTZER/Itemizer-Observer

Competitors had a variety of open class contests to enter at the Polk County Fair, including fresh flowers.

A 'moo' mentous event



JOLENE GUZMAN/Itemizer-Observer

Cuteness abounds during the Beautiful Baby contest on Saturday morning at the Polk County Fair.



TOP LEFT: A contestant and her goat partner race through the goat obstacle course at the Polk County Fair on Thursday evening. Before the obstacle course, goats and their human counterparts were judged in a costume contest.
STEPHANIE BLAIR/Itemizer-Observer

ABOVE: Charlie the velociraptor and his handler drew crowds of onlookers, some a little apprehensive, during his times loose at the fairgrounds last weekend. Those brave enough to get close could pet him and take photos with him. Others decided to keep their distance.
JOLENE GUZMAN/Itemizer-Observer



LEFT: Sheep await grooming in the sheep and goat barn at the Polk County Fair on Friday afternoon. Animal exhibits are always a popular attraction at the fair and this year's lineup made for crowded barns.
JOLENE GUZMAN/Itemizer-Observer

Auction day brings range of emotions

By Lukas Eggen
The Itemizer-Observer

RICKREALL — On the outside, Owen Jones looked calm, cool and collected. He was moments away from leading his steer into the 4-H and FFA Youth Market Auction during the Polk County Fair on Saturday afternoon. Jones, 11, is in his third year with 4-H, but this was his first time bringing a steer to auction. Although he has been through the auction process before, auction day still left before, a mix of emotions ranging from happiness to an almost sense of dread of what was to come. "It's really sad," Jones said. "You can do all you want to prepare, but it doesn't really help."

Jones spent hours each day grooming his steer. During the months of preparation, Jones said you connect with your animal — even when things aren't so easy. "I like working with cows, even though sometimes it feels like I don't," Jones said. "Sometimes, when they don't want to listen to you and start running you over it's hard, but overall, it's fun." Those struggles have served a higher purpose, Jones said. "It teaches you a lot of patience and to be able to stay calm in stressful situations," he said. While this was a moment to shine, it was also a moment that signaled what was to come — mainly Jones' steer going to a slaughterhouse.

And, despite the smile he put on, Jones couldn't help but let his sadness show through. "It's hard (to have to say goodbye)," he said. But the auction was also a proud moment, especially for Owen's mother, Michelle. "He's learned responsibility and how to take ownership of something," she said. "He spent three or four hours a day cleaning, feeding and taking care of the steer. The ownership you get from that is something I don't think a lot of kids his age have." Despite the bittersweet afternoon, Owen said he wouldn't trade his experience for anything. "If people are thinking of joining 4-H, they should because it's really fun," he said.



LUKAS EGGEN/Itemizer-Observer

Owen Jones prepares his steer for auction on Saturday afternoon.