

'93 edition of fair closes



Kurt Ellison

Ann Knowles' entry in the antique carriage division of the fair horse show is judged by Fred MacMillan, of Watsonville, who has been judging horse shows for 50 years. Knowles received a second.

Fair attendance down

By ETHAN BARON
STAFF WRITER

Two Ferris wheels spun, pigs raced snout to snout, and bungee jumpers flung themselves off a 200-foot platform, but the pathways through this year's County Fair remained uncrowded for most of its six-day run, which ended yesterday.

Attendance fell off by about 2,000 people — or 6 percent —

from last year, with about 48,000 people passing through the gates, said fair manager John Kegebein.

Kegebein blamed cool weather and the depressed economy for the drop in attendance, but said fair organizers were pleased to see large numbers of families out at the fairgrounds. In past years, he said, people fighting and large groups loiter-

ing scared off some families.

"We want people to come out here and enjoy it feeling safe and comfortable," Kegebein said.

Five people were arrested in three separate fights at the fair over the weekend, Sheriff's deputies said. But they were relatively minor incidents, and there were no serious injuries, according to

See FAIR page 2 ►



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Curtis Parry, left, and Aaron Thorton bid for the grand champion swine at the fair's livestock auction Saturday.

RP SEP 20 1993 p.2

FAIR

► From Page 1

ing to deputies.

While surveys given out at the fair brought few negative comments, some fair-goers complained that it simply cost too much to attend, he said. Organizers offered several dollar-discount coupons through supermarkets, bowling alleys and a lumber business, but few people took advantage of the savings, he said.

Organizers have no plans to raise prices next year, but it is unlikely they will lower them, either, Kegebein said.

Food vendors took in about the same amount of money as last year, with some vendors

such as the Salsipuedes Fire Department's tri-tip sandwich booth, the Watsonville Band fried artichoke stand, and Smokin' Jim's Barbecue doing particularly well, Kegebein said.

Participation in fair events remained about the same as last year, Kegebein said, with "encouraging" increases in the number of junior participants in the floriculture gardens and livestock shows.

Next year, fair organizers will try to add shows at the Alaskan pig faces, a standing-room-only event, Kegebein said. White tiger shows filled the grandstands every time; next year, planners will try to get tiger trainer William Vos to come back, or get an equally popular grandstand event, he said.