

SHMUEL THALER/SENTINEL

It's rush hour in the livestock area at the Santa Cruz County Fair as Erica Bianchi, center, and her fellow Future Farmers of America compete in the senior division for swine showmanship on Wednesday morning.

Swine's TIME TO SHINE

Members of Future Farmers of America, 4-H Club put pigs in the spotlight

Fairs - 2000

By GEORGE CILLEY

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WATSONVILLE — Future Farmers of America hogged the spotlight at the fair Wednesday.

Kids from 4-H and FFA clubs across the area hit the Santa Cruz County Fairgrounds, livestock in tow, to earn recognition for months of effort, vying for prizes in showmanship and market.

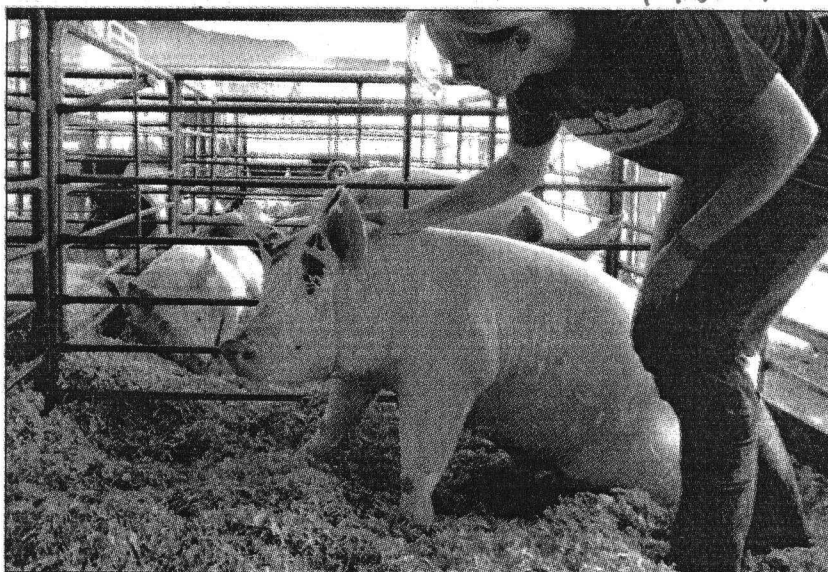
Edee Wildman says showmanship is what drew her to raising pigs.

"That's where you get to see the relationship between pigs and owners," Wildman said.

"A good relationship with your pig is key to controlling it in the show ring," says Wildman. But if you don't have that, "when the pigs get out there, it's downright entertaining."

Market is all about the quality of the pig. Showmanship awards are based on the ability of the pig's owner to show the pig using just a pole to guide it.

In the market competition the judges assess the quality of the pig and the stakes can be high.



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Edee Wildman of Scotts Valley 4-H spends some time in the fair's swine barn with her 260-pound Hampshire-Yorkshire cross, 'Butters,' who will be auctioned off Saturday.

"Kids learn about how to make better product for the buyers," says Dawn White, a co-chair of the fair's livestock committee. The hog that takes the grand champion award can earn up to

three or four times more at auction, White said. The auction is 10 a.m. Saturday.

This year's market competition

SEE FAIR ON A2

'These kids could be considered pioneers some day for blazing a trail of a new way of exhibiting market animals at county fairs.'

VINCE LOPES, coordinator for a new market program featuring naturally fed animals



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Yesterday's Farm is a big draw during Education Day at the fair on Wednesday.

FAIR

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launches a new category for naturally fed animals. The category is limited to animals fed on a purely grass or organic diet. Vince Lopes, coordinator for the new program, said the category was introduced because of "consumer trends somewhat unique to Santa Cruz County" for grass-fed and organic meats.

"These kids could be considered pioneers some day for blazing a trail of a new way of exhibiting market animals at county fairs," said Lopes. "As they grow up and observe natural-fed classes at future fairs, they can tell their children and grandchildren that they were the first ever to exhibit in this venue."

Lopes thinks other county fairs will follow suit.

Responsibility is key among lessons learned for these youths.

Rayce Pipkin of the Morgan Hill FFA says he learned how to budget.

Pipkin, in his second year raising pigs, said, "Your parents pay for your first hog and next year I'll have to pay for my own. That's a lesson for later in life."

At the edge of the show rings, family, friends and fans of the competitors watched the young entrants guide their pigs around. Cheers rang out as the judge took the microphone and announced his verdict. He pointed to each competitor

IF YOU GO

SANTA CRUZ COUNTY FAIR

WHAT: Exhibits, hands-on activities, demonstrations, live entertainment, livestock, vendors, carnival

WHEN: Noon to 11 p.m. Thursday through Friday; 10 a.m. to 11 p.m. Saturday and Sunday

WHERE: County Fairgrounds, 2601 E. Lake Ave., Watsonville

COST: Adults, 13-61, \$10 (\$8 advance); children, 5-12, \$5 (\$4 advance); seniors, 62 and older, \$6 (\$5 advance); family (two adults, two children) \$22, pre-sale only; parking, \$5

DETAILS: www.santacruzcountyfair.com

and called out their placement.

Salinas FFA chapter members Garth Graham and Ethan Heacox took home top prizes. Graham received the grand champion prize, while Heacox earned the title of master showman. Adam Escobar of the Gilroy chapter received the reserved grand champion.

Watching the show from atop the ring fence, Cody Lingbeck of Salinas said he raised and showed pigs as a kid. Now he works in the farming industry and shows up to support young farmers.

Also at the fair, another group of four-legged friends put on a show with a bit more force.

FAIR HIGHLIGHTS

TODAY

10:30 and 11:30 a.m. SC Canine Association Police Search & Rescue Dogs
7:30 p.m. Antsy McClain and the Trailer Park Troubadors

FRIDAY

6 p.m. Open Livestock Judging Contest
7:30 p.m. The Turtles featuring Flo and Eddie

SATURDAY

10 a.m. Junior Livestock Auction
7:30 p.m. Peter Rivera

SUNDAY

10:30 a.m. 4-H Youth Dog Show
7:30 p.m. Pro Wrestling Revolution

In front of a large crowd, officers from the Santa Cruz Police Department and the Santa Cruz County Sheriff's Office showed off their K-9 units. The departments brought two active-duty malinois, as well as a German shepherd still in training.

The officers demonstrated a narcotics search, as well as takedowns of combative suspects. After the demonstration, kids were allowed to meet the dogs.

Marv Gangloff, a former police officer who has been training police dogs for 40 years, said they want to introduce the public to police dogs and show that the animals are doing a job and are not vicious.