

Fair ends sizzling week with crowds at shows

ELIZABETH BINGHAM PHOTO
Saturday night saw the final events of the 2023 Bremer County Fair, including a rodeo and a street dance.



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The 2023 Bremer County Fair wrapped up Saturday night after a hot week. Temperatures reached as high as 97 degrees before storms moved in late Friday to clear the air.

Danny Buls, Fair Board treasurer, noted that a few adjustments were made to minimize heat-related problems.

"The beef show started an hour or two earlier than was originally planned," he said. Some other events were also adjusted slightly due to the high temperatures.

Because of the constant need to hydrate, drinking water for workers was running low, Buls said. "We just have water coolers and water supplies all over."

Keeping animals as comfortable as possible was a priority for competitors, according to Renee Neil, auxiliary Fair Board member.

"They care for their animals, that's for sure," she said. She noted that the Butler County Fair Board provided several big fans for use in the barns, which was helping with animal comfort.

Chance Lantz, owner of Lantz Exotics and Animal Rentals, opened the zoo tent early each day to allow visitors in while the weather was still cool.

"That hot spot [of the day], people kind of go away for a while," he said. The animals, however, were doing fine. "They're used to a lot more heat."

Despite the muggy weather, most fair activities ran as planned, with daily 4-H/FFA animal shows, fair rides, special entertainment and happy visitors.

On Wednesday, Courtney Buss, 16, of Plainfield was on the fairgrounds bright and early to show her 4-year-old Australian Shepherd, Colt, in the dog show.

She said she really appreciates dogs because of "how they run so fast. They keep up with different kinds of animals."

Former Ag teacher Reed Hockenson of Lone Tree, Iowa, was in town to watch his



Logan Lauderman wrestles a steer in 5.0 seconds at the Wright Rodeo during the Bremer County Fair.

ELIZABETH BINGHAM PHOTO

niece and nephew show their pigs. He shared some of his swine show knowledge:

"[Judges] want them to be free and easy-moving. They don't want them to be too heavy. They want them to be wide-based, long. They don't want them to be overly fat. You can see that across their top line [the animal's back]."

He looked at one of the last pigs in the ring.

"That girl's pig, that's a show pig," he said.

Thursday at the fair started with the moved-up beef show.

Callie Jensen, 13, of Plainfield, nabbed Overall Champion Breeding Heifer with her pregnant Angus named Reggie.

"I'm going to the Northeast Iowa Showdown," she shared, as a result of the

win.

Caleb Lentz, from Nashua-Plainfield school, showed his young heifer, a Foundation Simmental, which is a cross of Angus and Simmental breeds.

"I've been competing with her just this year, but I've been competing since I was a little kid," he said. When asked what he likes about showing cattle at the fair, he said, "Just working with them and the competitiveness with friends."

In the rabbit tent, the Baskett family from Waverly was checking in on the rabbits they would show later in the day.

Maud, 9, held her rabbit, Elvis. She said she likes rabbits because "they're friendly. I can hold them."

Her sister, Eliza, 11, is fond of the New Zealand breed they raise.

"Those are the ones I like," she said.

"They're not giant." The family does have a continental giant, which weighs 13-15 pounds, but she likes the smaller size. "They're not too big, but they're not too small."

For the rabbit show, "I'm showing them as a pen of three fryers," Eliza said.

"That's not all of their fate!" clarified the girls' mother, Lindsey.

"Showing rabbits is really easy," Eliza explained, "because all you do is go put them in a box. The judge takes them out and looks at them."

On Friday, Clover Kids, Riggs Thimmesch, 6, and his sister, Kenley, 8, from Sumner prepared to show their sheep, Captain and Jasmine.

"This is like their bottle/bucket lamb show," explained their dad, Adam, "just to introduce them to the showing."

Kenley explained how they care for their sheep.

"We have to wash them, and then we give them food and water," she said. "And the vet comes to check on them."

Kierstyn Klein, 14, of Waverly was drying her sheep, Olaf, with help from her friend Maddy Whitney.

"I like the whole getting-your-sheep-ready-and-making-them-look-good stuff," she said. She was planning to prep and show four sheep Friday, which would keep her busy.

Gabe Lohmann, 12, from Waverly was in the sheep barn with a trio of animals.

"Today I'm going to be showing three lambs," he said. Discussing their care, he said, "We have to clip them every month. That keeps them not as hot and then they'll grow better."

He said the lambs received a full shearing right before the fair, so their bones and muscles are easier to see.

Mya Hinrichs, 8, from Waverly and her cousin, Alivia Lee, 9, from Rochester, Minnesota, were helping family members by holding goats outside the show ring.

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Mya explained that she has shown a calf at the fair but is too young to show a goat.

"Next year I'm going to show a goat," she said. "We have a lot of goats."

In fact, the family had nine goats at the fair this year. "We were supposed to have 13," Mya said, "but they were too naughty."

Saturday was the final day of the fair, and the intense heat finally eased after the previous night's thunderstorms.

Olivia Myers, 8, from Sumner, held her black bottle/bucket calf, Angel, after a good showing. Angel mooed loudly and nibbled on the ribbon Olivia held in her hand.

"She's friendly," said mom Holly. She laughed. "She wants to eat the ribbon."

In the dairy barn, 17-year-old Kim Kalenske of Fairbank waited to show her Brown Swiss cow. A veteran at showing cattle since fourth grade, Kim was looking forward to showing Ginger, a spring calf born March 1, in the regular dairy show.

"This is great!" she said. "My big sister is coming with her boyfriend" to watch the show.

Nearby, Mackenna Boevers, 11, of Readlyn prepped her Jersey cow, Mocha, for showing, brushing the hair up along the spine before stiffening it with hairspray.

While Mocha is mostly a good cow, "she gets sassy," Mackenna said. "Jerseys are sassy, but she's really sassy."

Like many 4-H kids, Mackenna spent most of the week at the fair. That became more difficult toward the end.

"I woke up at 4:30 to get here because my parents had to go back to work," she said. "So I've been up really early getting here. Last night I only got so many hours of sleep. The night before I only got four hours."

In the zoo tent, worker Kyle Schlosser held reptiles for visitors to touch. He showed 2-year-old Roy Klein an albino ball python named Pearl. Then he held up a small alligator named Augustus Boots.

"It's like petting a dinosaur," he told the small boy. "You want to see his teeth?"

Corbin Schwickerath from New Hampton came by to check out the snake.

"She's shedding a bit," Schlosser pointed out. "She's not very mobile right now because we had a little bit colder weather last night."

He noted that he is mindful of safety when he handles the python.

"I make sure before I touch this thing that I feed her first," he said. "I don't want to wind up as supper."

After spending all week at the fair, Mackenna Boevers was sad to see the end of it, despite the lack of sleep.

"I'm disappointed because it's done," she said.



CARRIE WRIGHT PHOTO

Above: Cute baby contest was held at the Bremer County Fair on July 29.

ELIZABETH BINGHAM PHOTOS

Left: Children enjoy a ride at the fair Saturday night. Below left: Kyle Schlosser at the zoo tent shows 2-year-old Roy Klein an alligator. "It's like petting a dinosaur," he said.

BREMER COUNTY FAIR PHOTO

Children pet TikTok Famous Gucci the Cow.



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