**Junior Livestock Shows, Are They Worth It?**
6-3-13

**Before, we discuss the merits of a junior livestock show, maybe I better define it. First of all, it is not a junior livestock show. It is  a young people's show where:  beef heifers, steers, dairy heifers, market lambs, breeding ewes, market hogs, horses and other animals are used as visual aids. About ninety percent of the people who come to a junior livestock show, come to see a son or daughter or someone else's son or daughter show themselves. The exhibitor must have a live animal in order to get into the show ring! Tennessee 4-Hers, FFA members and other young people have the opportunity to participate in several local, county, district, state and national livestock project activities.**

**The growth and success of these junior livestock projects depends upon the interest of the youngsters and encouragement from their parents, who get involved and invest their time and money in a livestock project. The junior livestock project should never be sold as a money making project. It is a teaching, learning project or an investment for the future and should be sold as such. The value of the junior livestock project is the opportunity offered to the youth to learn, grow and develop his or her character.**

**What Does It Teach?**
**First, it teaches the youth to get along with people. Showing animals; winning, losing and so forth helps the youth get along with others. Also, during this time the youth work closely with family members, creating closer family ties. The activities involved with these junior livestock projects demonstrates other skills the 4-H and FFA members have acquired.**

**Second, feeding and caring for the junior livestock animal teaches responsibility. Its the 4-H or FFA members responsibility to hear the alarm clock and obey it. It takes a lot of determination to go out on a cold morning to feed and care for an animal that depends on them; skip ball practice or other activities to care for the needs of their project animal. If they learn nothing more than that, then feeding is worth while.**

**Third, junior livestock projects teaches youth to attend to details. In feeding and caring for their animals and especially thru life, it is often the little things that count. The youth who goes the extra mile to get the job done. Responding to an animals needs can easily be carried over into responding to one's fellowman's needs.**

**Fourth, It teaches the members about making decisions. Decision making is the most painful task a person has. The good animal shown this year did not just happen to be there. Someone planned it that way! Deciding which animal to select, what to feed, how to break it to lead and train it to show.**

**Fifth, Feeding teaches the youth to plan. For without a good planning to have plenty of fresh feed on hand we are sunk.**

**Sixth, somewhere along the line, we hope these 4-Hers and FFA members will learn a little about agriculture and livestock production. An appreciation for animal agriculture is an asset that has no dollar value. We do not expect every youth who feeds, cares for, trains, fits and shows a junior livestock project animal to become a livestock farmer/rancher. Neither do we expect all little league baseball and football players to go professional.**

**Livestock projects are a family affair. I do not mean the whole family does the work. I mean the whole family must enjoy and have an interest in the project. Half of the value is lost if the parents do not attend the show.**

**I think we are prone to look at investment thru the wrong end of the telescope. For example: we do not by a TV, we buy entertainment; we do not miss a day of school, we lose a day of education. By the same token we do not invest toward a premium list or purchase a youths’ market animal in a premium sale. Rather, we invest in the future of some boy or girl, who will in turn will help to keep America the greatest country on Earth.**

**There are many times when all of us: 4-Hers, FFA members, parents and leaders wonder if the long hours required in the junior livestock projects are really worth the effort. If teaching other young people to cooperate with others, handle responsibility, learn skills and have an appreciation for animal agriculture are worthy endeavors, then junior livestock projects are an investment in the future that cannot be measured in dollars and cents.**

**I trust that a few of my comments will serve to help convenience youth, parents and others that they are "worth it".**

**The article "Junior Livestock Shows, Are They Worth It? was a speech or project report given by a 4-Her some 29 years previous to today. It was found going through a box of archives recently. These same l through a box of archives recently. These same lessons hold true for the youth of today.**