

4-H'ers get ready for fair

Written by Elizabeth Barrett
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Kids say working with animals pays off

Daily road trips to rolling pasture between Gothenburg and Farnam is a given for the Charity and Nate Wyatt family each summer.

Although only two of the Wyatt children are eligible for 4-H, the two youngest tag along with their older siblings to work with calves and pigs that live on land owned by relatives.

Spending time with the animals each day pays off in the show ring, according to 11-year-old Tucker who had a grand champion feeder calf last year.

This year, Tucker—a three-year 4-H veteran—will be accompanied by his sister, Addi. At 8 years old, Addi will show feeder calves and pigs at the Dawson County Fair that started last Saturday.

“It’s all about the relationship you have with the animal that ties into showmanship,” Tucker said. “And I like spending time with the animals and getting to know them.

“Just like people, each one has a different personality.”

Tucker was at the top of the showmanship game during the swine show two years ago when he and his pig received grand champion honors.

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“Sometimes the work gets boring but once it’s fair time, it’s exciting because your hard work pays off,” he said.

Perhaps the most challenging aspect of working with the livestock is their unpredictability especially early in the season when the calves haven’t been handled by humans.

The Wyatts herd the calves and their mothers into pens on land owned by Scott and Rhonda Russman of Farnam.

They then separate the calves from their mothers and go to work.

Charity Wyatt, the children’s mother, calls those early excursions “rodeo nights” after Tucker’s first year in 4-H and experience with a young steer they called “Crazy.”

“It was like a rodeo every time Tucker tried to put a halter on him,” Charity said with a laugh.

All of the children have been dragged around the property by the show calves and have learned to “hang on” unless the situation becomes dangerous.

“That teaches the calf to train to a halter which means you’re in control and you’re the boss,” Charity said.

Besides being dragged, the kids have been kicked and stepped on and once witnessed a comical scene that they still laugh about.

