

What I've Learned from Raising an Animal for the Fair

Hello my name is Aliza, I am 16 years old and a sophomore at Fillmore High School. As well as raising animals, I love playing soccer and am on the FHS JV Girls Soccer team. I have been a part of the Sespe 4-H club since I was 5 years old and started out raising Pygmy goats for 5 years before switching to market animals. When I decided to start raising pigs at the age of 10, I raised Turkeys for 2 years along with my pig projects. I have been in 4-H for 12 years and this will be my 7th year raising a market swine. This year I have entered into the 2021 805 Ag Kids Invitational with a market swine project. My experience in 4-H started when I was very young. I had an older sister who raised lambs and as I saw her raise her animal, I so desperately wanted one of my own. What I didn't realize at 5 years old was how raising an animal would impact my life.

Throughout the years that I have shown and raised my animals for the Ventura County Fair, and through all of these experiences, I have learned many different things. The first of those lessons was really understanding the hard work and dedication it takes to nurture an animal from a few weeks old to the age of market ready. Every species has its own type of competitiveness, we raise our market animals for around five months and then bring them to the fair to show off our hard work. One week at the fair is really made up of hundreds of hours that I and other exhibitors have put into raising our project. From countless feedings, showmanship practices, baths, clinics, and reading up on new show techniques, all of this hard work and dedication of time is represented into one animal. We spend one week at the fair and at the end, the animal is auctioned off to the highest bidder. One thing I have always known is the privilege of being able to sell my market animals at a fair price during my time as a 4-Her. I appreciate every single buyer that purchases our market animals because as my animal represents my dedication, hard work, and time I put into it, the check from the buyer represents their belief in a program that teaches their exhibitors about hard work and dedication. All of the money earned from my projects go into my bank account to be used in the next years projects. This responsibility has taught me that while showing animals can get expensive, I realize the lessons it has taught me are priceless. When I first showed my Pygmy goat (Lady Bug) I was 5 years old, I remember thinking it was the hardest thing to go out in an arena in front of hundreds of people and show her. I was so nervous, but after I was in the arena, I just phased out the audience and showed Lady Bug off to the judge. I had absolutely no idea what was happening, but we won the class! My parents and friends were jumping up and down so happy for me and Lady Bug! Later after the day was over, we left the arena and it really sank in that we were the Champions! I had never felt so much excitement!! After the years of raising Lady Bug, I was finally old enough to raise a market animal, so I decided to raise a market swine. I remember going into the market swine project thinking it was going to be as easy as raising a pygmy goat. Well I was wrong, my first year in market pigs was tough physically and I wasn't sure if I would continue on, but I'm glad that I dedicated myself and stuck it through. My Turkey projects were also a lot of fun and different, but just not my choice of type of project to continue with raising. In my opinion every year is different. Every project is different. Sometimes you have a great easy going project or sometimes you have a difficult project. You just have to try to figure things out along

the way and you stick with it and complete the project, this is the dedication that 4-H has taught me. When you start something, you see it through to the end, even when it's not your favorite. Raising the different projects that I have raised and shown throughout the years have taught me that winning can mean many more things than winning the class, or having the champion title, it is knowing that you have done your best at raising and showing your animals and completed the project with dedication and pride, while having fun along the way. I have made so many memories throughout my countless years of hard work raising animals and have met so many people from all over the county that even if I never win another championship, with the lessons I have learned, I still call myself a winner.