

What I have Learned From Raising an Animal For The Fair

4H and raising an animal for the fair has been a huge part of my life. It has impacted it from many different aspects. I am 15 years old and have been a member of Las Posas 4h for seven years. I have raised four lambs and three steers for our county fair. Growing up, my entire family was a part of 4H animal projects. I have been walking lambs and going to the fair since before I could even talk. I helped out at project meetings when the animals were taller than me. I loved and love everything about the animal projects and going to the fair for 'fair week'. Throughout all the years raising an animal for the fair, the biggest lessons I have taken away is to be able to look at challenges and see them as opportunities, time management, and consistency because in order to keep an animal healthy and obedient, you need to be consistent with walking, feeding, washing, cleaning their pen, medications, and being ready for whatever comes your way.

My fourth year being a part of 4H, was my first year raising a steer and it was quite a rollercoaster! My steers name was Moose, he was an angus lowline mini steer. When I first got him, everything seemed pretty normal, he was just a little skittish and small. As time went on I realized that he wasn't gaining enough weight for him to be able to make weight for fair. Furthermore, it became apparent that Moose and his brothers had major anger issues. We later found out his two brothers weren't castrated correctly and they were still bulls. Luckily, my steer was correctly castrated, but his weight was cutting it very close as fair week was approaching. I did everything possible to push his weight up, everything, but in the end he was about twenty pounds under! I can still remember that moment, all of my emotions rushing through my body at once, concerned about breaking even after those long, hardworking 9 months; the embarrassment, and sadness. I was able to look at this challenge and see it as an opportunity because of all the things 4h and raising an animal has taught me. I didn't let that moment and my feelings prevent me from reaching out and trying to find buyers. I sent out about 90 handwritten letters prior, letting people know there was a chance that Moose and I weren't going

to make weight; those letters came in handy! After I found out he hadn't made weight, I reached out to various people and continued to make any connections I could. Eventually I found a woman, Joanne, who agreed to buy my steer and she kept him alive at her ranch in Malibu apparently. Every couple years, she buys animals for her farm, luckily this was one of those years! I will be forever grateful for Joanne and for my determination and choice to not be defeated, or quit.

Another crucial lesson 4H and raising an animal for the fair has taught me has been about managing my time and consistency. When you first buy your animal, no matter the species they are going to be terrified, some worse than others. It's going to take a while for them to warm up to you. I have definitely felt frustrated and conquered, especially when it came to raising steers. I've even felt scared. I worried that I would never be able to tame my animal and be taken out in the ring when it comes time to show. I would be lying, if I said I have never had a nightmare about my steer running through the judge and myself. It takes weeks of time, consistency and dedication to be able to even walk your animal correctly, let alone teaching your animal how to show in the ring. But if you keep taking the time to go out and work with your animal daily you will be best friends in no time, it won't be scary anymore. The opportunity to create a real bond and do well in showmanship and market is just around the corner. I am a very busy kid. I have had to learn how to juggle a job, school, club sports, school sports, and 4H. It hasn't always been easy, but I have been forced to grow up a little, 4H and raising an animal for the fair gave me that push. You are taking care of the life of an animal and if you share a pen with other kids' animals you are taking care of those animals as well. You have to take the responsibility seriously and make sure you remember to feed them the proper amounts, and make time to walk, check their water, and wash them. I also need to make sure that I am able to complete all of my school work, and get to my job on time. I have to manage the time for my soccer schedule, and make sure I am not overbooking myself or my parents since I'm not old enough to drive yet. Schedules and communication is most definitely key. In addition I have

to make sure my 4H responsibilities are met. Since I am on the board I need to attend the board meetings, along with our club meetings, and animal project meetings.

I owe 4H so much. The experience of raising an animal for the fair and being apart of 4H has given me endless opportunities. The opportunity to be a part of a board, to learn all about creating meetings and agendas, and knowledge of how to run a meeting. The opportunity to write this essay, win belt buckles, make new life longing friendships, to be a part of the unique experience of a live and virtual auction. In my opinion, every aspect of this experience is an opportunity! I have learned how to manage my time, how to stay consistent, and how to look at challenges and see them as opportunities, and I owe that all to being able to raise an animal to go to fair.