

Animals, produce best of show at area fairs

BY GINA GOODMAN
Record-Eagle staff writer

Northern Michigan fairs were not always the spectacles they are now, with hot dog stands, cotton candy, spinning amusement park rides and live entertain-

ment.

They began as a way for local people to show and market their agricultural prowess, said Brent Edgecomb, president of the Northwestern Michigan Fair in Traverse City.

Fruits, vegetables, livestock and crafting skills were displayed, often as a type of competition to see who was the better farmer.

The fairs grew as they became more popular and soon became annual events where people would come to relax, socialize and see the exhibits.

Although much has changed over the years, most fairs are still about the animals and home-grown produce from local farming families.

"Fairs have always been a place to compete with livestock, and to showcase homemade goods, like antiques and artwork and agricultural products," Edgecomb said.

This year's Northwestern Michigan Fair offers a midway with rides and games, an arena for derby events, along with 4-H livestock, arts and crafts. The fair will be held Aug. 8-14, with harness racing on Sunday and Monday.

The 4-H building will be open for kids to see and learn about the animals, said Barbara Duvall, 4-H Youth Educator.

"This is new this year," she said. "There will be face painting, crafts, and fun games and activities."

People can pay admission at the gates and are welcome to roam around and look at the animals and events. Tickets must be purchased for amusement park rides.

The Northern District Fair in Cadillac has also been around for many years and spans two or three counties, said Rudy Grahek, president of the Northern District Fair Association.

"I remember the Cadillac fair from way back, as a very small child in 1938," he said. "It has grown over the years. From the animals to



Record-Eagle file photo

Tending to animals keeps children in 4-H busy during the Northwestern Michigan Fair and other county fairs.

the grandstand to everything."

Grahek said the most popular events are the demolition derbies. Other events at the fair include the "Kids Peddle Pull," where children pull small tractors with weights on the back, the heavy-weight horse pull, the Flying Star Rodeo, 4-H tents and a Battle of the Bands.

This year, the Northern District Fair will run Aug. 16-21.

Smaller county fairs such as the Cheboygan County Fair in Cheboygan, the Antrim County Farm Fair in Bellaire and the Emmet County Fair in Petoskey also have many events for people to enjoy.

The Cheboygan County Fair begins Aug. 6 and runs through the 14th.

Some featured grandstand events are the motor cross, horse pulls, Extreme Sports skateboard demon-

stration and demolition derby. Other events will include a horse show, an exotic animals exhibit, Family Fun Day, the Queens Pageant and a 4-H day.

The 4-H events will run throughout the week. There is also a Midway with carnival rides and games.

The Emmet County Fair has 4-H projects and livestock, amusement park rides, a grandstand with a demolition derby and motorcycle racing, a Kids Day, which will include a 4-H rabbit show, Pocket Pets show and an exotic animal show.

The fair is renovating its grounds and will be remodeling four horse barns, building a new 10,000 square-foot T-Barn including an indoor show arena and a 4,000-seat grandstand, and paving the parking lot and pedestrian walkways.

The fair will take place Aug. 21-29.

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