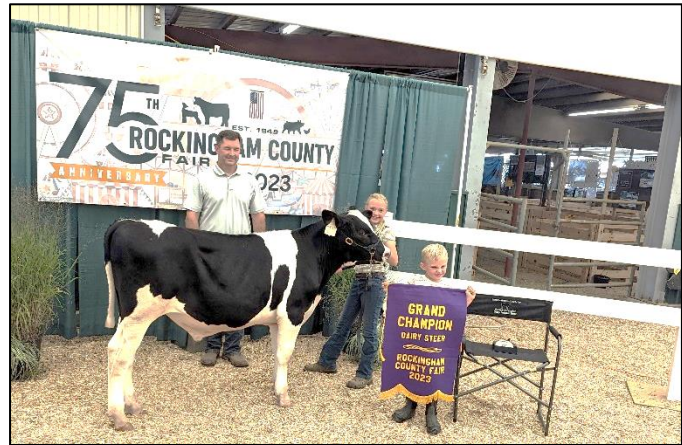




Rockingham County 4-H / FFA Dairy Feeder Steer Show & Sale

As Rockingham County is the largest dairy county in Virginia and beef from dairy animals constitutes about 20% of the beef supply, adding a dairy feeder steer show and sale to the already successful Rockingham County Livestock show was a perfect fit. Jeremy Daubert, ANR Dairy Agent Rockingham County Extension, received a grant from the Virginia Cattle Industry Board to bring this project to life and provide area youth the opportunity to learn about raising and marketing dairy steers.



The planning phase included research from successful dairy shows in the Midwest and gathering data on best practices for policies and structure. Next an informational session was held in early 2023 to garner interest from youth and answer questions. Seventeen exhibitors signed up to show in this new event. Calves were purchased from local producers and feed was purchased from local stores contributing to the local economy. Extension agents visited the exhibitors to tag and health check each steer.

A showmanship workshop was held on July 22 at the Fairgrounds which gave exhibitors the opportunity to learn from Jeff Shemler, a veteran in dairy shows and Maryland Extension Agent. Youth not only had the opportunity to practice hands-on skills, but also weigh their steer to ensure the rate of gain was proper for the show. Additionally, the required YQCA training was conducted to allow exhibitors to show in the local Fair and the Virginia State Fair if desired.



The 75th Rockingham County Fair took place Tuesday, August 14, 2023 through Saturday, August 19, 2023. The Sunday prior to the show, sixteen exhibitors presented nineteen steers during weigh-in and all made weight. They weights ranged between 425-750 pounds with the average steer weight at 595 pounds. Each steer was housed in the barn and cared for by the exhibitor until show day on Tuesday with the sale taking place the following Friday. Fifteen of the exhibitors competed in showmanship with all steers competing in confirmation. A Skillathon was also held with categories in beef cuts and dairy steer care.

On Friday, all steers were sold through the livestock sale. The floor was purchased for \$2.00/lb by a local feed yard and all went to the floor. The average selling price that the youth received was \$3.78/ lb. The gross amount received by youth through the sale was \$42,516.25. This was \$19,916.25 over the floor price.

“There has been a variety of things that I have learned from working with dairy steers including feeding a dairy animal for beef production. Hard work, perseverance, and personal finance skills are skills that I have gained while working with these animals. They are a lower cost, a shorter time commitment, and are smaller in size than a regular steer, being easy to work with and efficient to feed. Overall, they have been a great experience that I will continue to take advantage of. “

Ayla Janney, Reserve Champion Dairy Steer

The event was a huge success with many of the youth participating being first-time steer showman. The exhibitors learned new skills for future show opportunities as well as the added value of purchasing dairy calves to raise to a feeder weight and market for a potentially higher price/lb. The exhibitors also had an opportunity to speak to the public about their project steers and answer any questions as many visitors toured the barn and attended the show. The show is already being planned for next year and organizers intend to make it an annual event.



Ayla Janney poses with her Reserve Grand Champion Steer.

“I am looking to take this knowledge and apply it to my future endeavors of being an animal nutritionist. I have gained the ability to know how to effectively and efficiently feed dairy steers. I will use these skills in my future livestock endeavors and in my future career.” Ayla Janney