Dairy Industry Celebrated at Richmond Black and White Days

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For the past 104 years, Black and White Days has been putting Richmond, Utah on the map. The event lasts for nearly a week and focuses on celebrating the dairy industry.

One of the biggest components of the event is the Western Spring National Holstein Show, which is also the longest-standing national Holstein show. Each year, between eight and 12 of these shows are hosted around the country. In order to maintain standing as a national show, there must be 125 Holsteins from at least four states or provinces. People and cattle travel from across the western United States and Canada to take part in the show in Richmond.

Black and White Days also provides a unique opportunity for youth through the dairy heifer contest, junior show and judging contest. It's not common for these youth-specific opportunities to be paired with a national show. Utah State University Extension assists in carrying out these activities.

Middle and high school age youth enter the dairy heifer contest via a written application that assesses their knowledge of the dairy industry. The application is formatted as a test and serves as a springboard for youth to deepen their knowledge of the industry. Contestants are encouraged to ask questions and search for answers to any portion of the assessment they don’t understand. Justin Jenson, a lecturer in the Department of Animal, Dairy and Veterinary Sciences and Extension Dairy Youth Specialist, wrote the application and explained that some questions are science based while others focus on current industry issues.

“Last year I had questions on robotic milking machines and this year about milk proteins,” Jenson said. “A2 beta casein in milk and BB kappa casein in milk have been in the press a lot this year, so I encouraged kids to learn about those.”

Contestants who do best on the application are invited to an in-person interview at Black and White Days. The interviews, hosted by contest sponsors, provide an opportunity for contestants to share what they learned as they completed the application. The top prize is a heifer calf, which was valued at approximately $10,000 this year. Other prizes for top competitors included clippers, cash to be used toward the purchase of a calf and scholarships to USU for older youth.

The dairy judging contest is open to 4-H and FFA members, as well as collegiate teams. The event is a comparative analysis of dairy cattle based on the idealness of each animal’s make-up in terms of dairy cow performance. Participants rank the cattle in each class from most to least ideal. Additionally, competitors prepare and present a set of oral reasons justifying to a judge how they ranked the cattle in a particular class. Participants are scored on how their rankings align with those of a professional and how their oral reasons were presented.

There were about 100 participants this year, including youth from as far as New York and Pennsylvania and a collegiate team that traveled from Texas. The 4-H and FFA participants judged eight classes and gave two sets of reasons. The collegiate teams judged 10 classes and presented reasons for their rankings of four of those classes.

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