Leah Miller of Ashland keeps a handle on Sawyer, her 5-month-old goat, at the Ashland County Fairgrounds during a goat clinic Tuesday. This year will be Miller’s first time showing a goat at the Ashland County Fair, which will run Sept. 14 to 20.

Knowing your goat

Exhibitors attend workshop in preparation for county fair

By DAN KUBACKI
TG Staff Writer

The Ashland County Fair is just a month away, and for 4-H members, that’s one more month to prepare their animals and themselves.

On Tuesday, the Ashland County 4-H Goat Committee prepared students with an informational meeting followed by demonstrations on how to properly trim, clean and care for each goat, ensuring that each animal will look its best during fair week. Several 4-Hers even brought their goats with them to the meeting at the fairgrounds’ goat barn, and at the conclusion of the session, students with goats participated in a mock showing.

Kathy Blackford, 4-H youth development director, estimated about 30 kids attended Tuesday’s goat clinic, which was the third of the summer. About 100 total students are expected to show goats at this year’s fair, she said.

Sarah Miller, 15, of Ashland brought her 8-month-old goat to Tuesday’s workshop. Although she’s never shown animals before — poultry, rabbits, sheep,” she said, “I tried sheep showing, but I couldn’t do it very well. I like goats a lot better, they’re a lot smaller.”

In addition to her maiden voyage into goat showing, Miller

Ashland County 4-H Goat Committee member Arden Fitch, left, speaks alongside Peanut about proper cleaning techniques during a goat clinic at the Ashland County Fairgrounds. Looking on at right are Jared Legg, Kegan Moore and Blake Gibb.

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Blake Gibb stands with his pygmy goat as exhibitors line up for a practice judging session during a goat clinic Tuesday at the Ashland County Fairgrounds. This year will be Gibb’s first time showing a goat at the fair.

Exhibitors learn how to care for, show their goats at county fair

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again will show rabbits and poultry during next month’s fair.

“I’m looking forward to trying goats, because I like doing new stuff,” Miller said.

Committee members opened the meeting with some basic rules and information for exhibitors about fair week, essentials for caring for their goats and key dates and times.

The committee will award honors to the 4-H’ers with the best pen decorations, cleanest pens and also “good neighbor” awards.

There also will be a goat dress-up contest 5 p.m. Monday, Sept. 15 inside the goat barn, to bring a little fun to fair week.

“We, as a committee, are here to help you,” said committee President Pat Fitch. “We want you to have fun, we want you to enjoy your project and grow up liking and loving goats.”

Committee member Glen Clevidence then took the floor to demonstrate the right way to give goats a proper haircut using clippers. As another committee member held the goat, Clevidence gently moved the clippers up from the animal’s legs to the body against the grain of the fur.

“You’ll want to do this about two weeks beforehand,” Clevidence said. “That way it gives them a chance to get nice, new hair growing. It’s crucial to have a nice, even coat.”

Then committee member Arden cleaning and filing the goat’s hooves. He also stressed to the kids and parents to enter fair week with a positive attitude and to have fun.

“To the parents, I want to say that this time in life goes fast with your kids, so enjoy it,” Fitch said.

The Fitches started showing goats after their 9-year-old daughter won a goat, Arden Fitch said. Now that daughter has grown up and is 23 years old, and Arden and Pat Fitch still are involved in the goat committee, looking to pass on the love of animals and agriculture to younger generations.

“What I really hope in the future is some little kid comes up when he gets to be an adult and says, ‘Gee Mr. Fitch, you helped me out to set goals or work with projects and learn all I could,’ ” Arden Fitch said. “And when your kids aren’t in it, there’s a little bit of loss there, you miss it.”

The goat workshop concluded with a mock show where exhibitors practiced leading their goats in a circle and positioning them as Clevidence pretended to be a judge. The committee members gave the students several pointers, including how to walk with their animals and to keep the goat between them and the judge.

When the clinic wrapped, Miller said she thought she learned some good tips about showing goats to help her at next month’s fair.

“It’s really helpful to learn how to show them,” she said.

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