

The Junior Livestock Show's Benefits

ON Friday one of our oldest and most rewarding competitive events will begin at the state fairgrounds. It is the 69th Oklahoma 4-H and FFA Junior Livestock Show.

The focal point will be the auction of champions in the fairgrounds arena beginning at 6 p.m. on Tuesday, March 20, but some of the most dramatic moments will occur before then.

When thousands of boys and girls from practically every county in the state are unloading their livestock from trucks, trailers and pickups every animal is potentially a big winner.

Then competition sets in. Competition is a part of life and the essence of the business world. It is evident in the sports arena and also in the political scene.

As the animals are judged on strict specifications the better ones move up and others are relegated to herds of "good but not quite good enough to win."

The purpose of a livestock show has been debated for years by ex-

perts. Is it to teach youngsters to raise and exhibit livestock? Is it to produce better animals for consumers? Is it to train boys and girls in good agricultural methods and reward them for their accomplishments?

Or is to satisfy desire of business and professional people to help youngsters get together money for an education or to get a start in life?

The correct answer is "All of the above," even though different people may hold that one or another is more important.

The livestock show is conducted and supported by the Southwest American Livestock Foundation, the Livestock Council of the Oklahoma City Chamber of Commerce, and the Sirloin Club of Oklahoma. Exhibitors come from Oklahoma's 148,000 4-H club members and 17,000 vocational agriculture students in every county.

By no means do all members go in for livestock projects as these organizations offer a variety of other

interests.

Not all of those who choose livestock come out ahead financially. Some pay too much for their calves or pigs. Others spend too much for feed or other expenses. But many take home hefty sales prices in addition to show ring awards and all of them learn something useful from their experiences.

After the 1983 show, John Quinn of Stillwater walked through the barns where thousands of animals and young people had spent five days and found no evidence of a riot, a drug bust, or a drunken brawl. Such things don't happen at a stock show.

"Oklahoma can take pride in knowing that there are youngsters who can have fun without a joint or a can of beer in their hands," Quinn said.

An observation of an unidentified coach to a youngster was "You didn't learn to lie, cheat, cuss or steal from that pig, lamb or calf you raised."