

Keep Kids' Minds Active During Summer Months

New study shows kids lose knowledge gained during school year if they don't keep learning.

Many Lancaster county families seek out 4-H hands-on educational opportunities to keep brains and bodies active during the summer months. Hundreds of 4-H'ers have learned science and math as they create rockets with volunteers such as Ron Suing. He has shared his passion for rockets with 4-H'ers for the past 30 years. Rocketry was one of the 51 classes which were offered recently at the Lancaster County 4-H Clover College (see page 1).

Summer educational experiences, such as those offered through 4-H are vital. Recent studies from the Johns Hopkins Center for Summer Learning demonstrated children may lose knowledge they gained during the school year over summer vacation.

"It's called summer learning loss, and according to research, all young people experience it over the summer if they aren't given opportunities to engage in learning or educational activities," says Bridget Mouchon, Green County University of Wisconsin-Extension educator.

During summer vacation, students lose on average nearly three months of what they learned in math class, Mouchon says. The break in studies also contributes to the achievement gap in reading performance between children from lower and higher income households.

"Providing some educational activities during the summer break will help your children maintain their learning

skills while enjoying time off from the classroom," says Mouchon.

The many 4-H projects which will be a part of the Lancaster County Super Fair create in-depth opportunities for learning and career development. 4-H curriculum is research-based and developed by land-grant universities throughout the nation.

In addition to involvement in 4-H, Mouchon offers the following suggestions for adults to keep kids on the path to learning over the summer.

- **Read together.** Work with your child to develop a summer reading list, and keep track of the books they read. Participate in your local library's summer reading program and even have your child prepare book reports about their favorite books. Book reports engage writing and critical thinking skills. Read along with younger children and if your child is older, read the same book and then discuss it together.

- **Build math skills.** Many adults feel uncomfortable working with kids on math skills and concepts, especially with older children. One idea is to have kids engage in everyday math — cooking and baking, estimating gasoline costs (gallons x price per gallon), or planning how to spend within a budget. Another suggestion is to play board games like Payday and Yahtzee, or card games like rummy and Uno. These can bring the whole family together for fun, and the math is a part of the game. A Web site with summer math activities

see *KIDS MINDS* on page 11

Tips for a Fun and Educational Day at the Fair

Toward the end of the summer, parents, grandparents, and child care professionals appreciate no or low cost learning. The Lancaster County Super Fair, Aug. 5-14, will offer many free activities — see the special section in this NEBLINE for a complete schedule and map.

Here are a few tips to make your time with children enjoyable and educational at the Lancaster County Super Fair:

General Safety

- Wear closed toed shoes such as tennis shoes. It makes the environment safer for you and your children.
- Bring strollers and/or wagons as a way to keep infants and toddlers in constant sight.
- Before arriving, apply sun block and insect repellent.
- Drink lots of water.
- Park close to the exhibits you plan to experience.
- Identify a meeting spot in case you get separated.

Attending Fairs: Precautions Visitors Should Take with Animals

- Animals have the right of way.
- Do not approach animals from behind. They do kick.
- Fast movements and loud noises may scare the animals.
- Do not feed the animals.
- Do not touch or pet animals, except at designated petting exhibits.
- Wash your hands with water and soap after any direct contact with animals.
- Supervise children younger than 5 years during hand washing and petting to make sure they don't put their hands or

other objects into their mouth or the animal's mouth.

- Avoid eating in animal exhibit areas.

Adapted from: Attending Fairs: Safeguarding Your Health and Nebraska's Livestock Industry, Rosie Nold, and David R. Smith. G1693

Educational Experiences

- Before the fair, check out books and videos about animals and plants from the Lincoln City Libraries.
- Review the fair schedule prior to the fair and plan your trip during events which are of interest to your children. For example, if you have a pet cat, watching part of the cat show will be fun and educational for your children.
- Create your own scavenger hunt or "can you find" game where children identify various animals and plants. Adapt it to the ages of the children. For example, younger children may identify the color of a cow and an older child may be able to identify different breeds.
- When exploring the garden produce, talk about which are fruits and which are vegetables. Talk about how you prepare the food.
- Identify five different flowers which are exhibited at the county fair. Explain the difference between annuals (planted each year) and perennials (come up year after year).
- Provide a little bit of spending money and teach children how to budget their food and entertainment dollars. Help them count change.

Creating Memories

- Take pictures along the way.
- Since the admission is free, several short visits may work better than one extended visit.

Learn About Animals at the Fair



BEEF CATTLE

| | |
|-----------------------------|--------|
| Male | Bull |
| Neutered male | Steer |
| Female before having a baby | Heifer |
| Female after being a mom | Cow |
| Baby | Calf |

Information

- A cow is pregnant for 285 days.
- A baby calf weighs about 80 to 100 pounds when it is born.
- There are over 16 breeds of beef cattle.
- Cattle eat hay, corn, oats, and grass.
- The cows and calves stay in the pasture during the summer. They eat grass and the calves drink their mother's milk.
- Calves quit drinking milk from their mother when they are about 6 months old.
- When beef cattle weigh about 1,200 pounds (1/2 ton), they will be "made" (processed) into meat.
- Cattle have four stomachs. This lets them swallow their food and then chew it (cud) again.

DAIRY CATTLE



| | |
|-----------------------------|-------------|
| Male | Bull |
| Neutered male | Steer |
| Female before having a baby | Heifer |
| Female after being a mom | Cow |
| Baby | Calf |
| Orphaned baby without a mom | Bucket Calf |

Information

- A cow is pregnant for 285 days.
- A baby calf weighs between 80 to 100 pounds when it is born.
- Bucket calves are taken care of and bottle fed by people.
- A cow produces approximately 1,000 gallons of milk each year.
- A cow produces milk only when she has given birth to a calf. One calf drinks about 2.5 to 3 gallons of milk a day. Dairy farmers separate a calf from its mother only one or two days after it is born. Then the calves are fed milk from a bottle for two or three months. The farmer begins to introduce hay and grain about one week later.
- The farmer is able to produce more milk than the calf needs by separating the

calf from the cow and feeding the cow plenty of food. A well fed dairy cow that is milked twice a day, can produce up to 6 gallons of milk per day.

- In the U.S., dairy cattle are divided into six major breeds. They are Holstein, Brown Swiss, Guernsey, Ayrshire, Jersey, and Milking Shorthorn.

SWINE (PIGS) (HOGS)

| | |
|-----------------------------|--------|
| Male | Boar |
| Neutered male | Barrow |
| Female before having a baby | Gilt |
| Female that is a mom | Sow |
| Baby | Piglet |

Information

- Sows are pregnant for 114 days — that is 3 months + 3 weeks + 3 days.
- A sow usually has 8-12 piglets in a litter.
- A piglet weighs about 2 pounds at birth.
- In six months a hog gains around 240 pounds.
- Pork is the #1 meat eaten around the world. China is the largest producer of pork and the U.S. is the second largest.
- Some may live longer. In fact, some pigs have lived as long as 15 years!
- There are eight major breeds of hogs in the U.S. The four most common breeds at the county fair are the Hampshire, Spot, Duroc, and Yorkshire.

SHEEP

| | |
|---------------|--------|
| Male | Buck |
| Neutered male | Wether |
| Female | Ewe |
| Baby | Lamb |

Information

- Wool is the "fuzzy hair" on the sheep.
- The wool from one sheep is called fleece.
- One sheep produces 2 to 30 pounds of wool each year.
- When you shave the wool off of a lamb it is called shearing. All the lambs at the county fair are already sheared.
- Sheep are usually sheared once a year.
- Sheep mostly eat grass, clover, weeds, and other plants.
- A lamb weighs around 140 pounds at the county fair.
- Sheep are ruminant animals which mean they have four stomachs.
- In the U.S., most sheep don't have horns.
- There are 35 breeds (different kinds) in the U.S. There are 914 different breeds in the world.

GOATS

| | |
|--------|------|
| Male | Buck |
| Female | Doe |
| Baby | Kid |

Information

- A doe usually has 2 kids each year.
- Favorite foods of goats are hay, grass, corn, and oats.
- Most dairy goats are good pets. They are very tame and can be led using a dog collar.
- On a world wide basis, more people drink goat's milk more often than cow's milk. Goat milk is very sweet. It is easy for your body to digest.

Check Out These Resources at Lincoln Libraries

These books, videos, and more are available at most Lincoln City Libraries:

BOOKS:

- *Cows* by Sara Swan Miller (j636.214)
- *Cattle* by Ann Larkin Hansen (j636.2)
- *Clarabelle: Making Milk and So Much More* by Chris Peterson (j636.214)
- *Pig* by Jules Older (j636.4)
- *Pigs* by Gail Gibbons (j636.4)
- *Life on a Pig Farm* by Judy Wolfman (j636.4)
- *Sheep* by Sara Swan Miller (j636.3)
- *Woolly Sheep and Hungry Goats* by Allan Fowler (j636.3)
- *Goats* by Ann Larkin Hansen (j636.39)
- *Goats* by Sara Swan Miller (j636.39)
- *Llamas* by Dorothy Hinshaw Patent (j599.636)
- *Llamas* by Emilie U. Lepthien (j599.636)

- *Chickens* by Sara Swan Miller (j636.5)
- *Chickens* by Robin Nelson, (j635.5)
- *Chicks & Chickens* by Gail Gibbons (j636.5)
- *Rabbits, Rabbits, and more Rabbits!* by Gail Gibbons (j636.932)
- *Foal to Horse* by Jason Cooper (j636.1)
- *Best Book of Ponies* by Jackie Budd (j636.1)

VIDEOS ON DVD:

- *The Milk Makers* (DVDj), 30 minutes
- *Our Feathered Friends: Adventures on a Chicken Farm* (DVDj636.5), 28 minutes
- *Dance with the Animals* (DVDj793.3), 45 minutes
- *Paws, Claws, Feathers and Fins* (DVDj636.088), 30 minutes