



Oconto County

# FAIR

August  
22-25  
2024



OCONTO COUNTY

**TIMES HERALD**

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# Much to see at Oconto County Youth Fair

Fairest of the Fair Grace Seefeldt is the event's main ambassador

By WARREN BLUHM  
News editor

The Oconto County Youth Fair has always been in Grace Seefeldt's blood.

"I've shown since I was little," Seefeldt said in a recent conversation. "My first picture of me at the fair, I'm sitting on my Uncle Ryan's calf as a baby."

As a sixth-grader in Lena, Seefeldt was named Junior Fairest of the Fair, serving as the fair's junior ambassador when Victoria Hull was Fairest of the Fair in 2017, and now, as an incoming sophomore at the University of South Dakota, as the 2024 Fairest of the Fair.

Seefeldt said she loves talking about the fair with people who may not understand.

"It's not just about the music or rides, it's about kids who are working hard," she said. "If you go up to them and ask, 'Hey, what's your animal's name?' they'll gladly tell you all about raising that animal."

The Oconto County Youth Fair has kept the word "youth" in its official name for a reason.

"It's about the youth, and for the youth,"

Seefeldt said. "We want to be there for the youth."

She has been active this summer, along with Fair Attendant Amber Seitz, who was unavailable for a sit-down interview because she was showing at the Wisconsin State Fair. The duo has ridden in several parades and spoken at events to help promote the fair, which takes place Aug. 22-25 at Zippel Park in Gillett.

"We make a great team," Seefeldt said of her relationship with Seitz.

Their schedule shifts into a different gear when the fair begins — they are the official hosts of the fair with duties like being part of the opening ceremony and handing out ribbons for the judges.

Much of the schedule will be familiar to longtime fair attendees, with the various animal barns and shows, rides and games, live music and a variety of horse and tractor pulls at the grandstand.

New this year are the long-awaited upgraded show ring and a swine show featuring exhibitors with special needs, scheduled after the Friday goat show at approximately 5 p.m.

Seefeldt said the special drive is patterned after a



Fairest of the Fair 2024 Grace Seefeldt, left, and Fair Attendant Amber Seitz ride in the Gillett Independence Day parade July 4.

FILE | NEW MEDIA

similar event at the state fair.

"I'm excited to see how it goes," she said. "It's a great addition to the fair."

Bingo is back, as well — set for 3 p.m. and 7 p.m. Aug. 22.

For the exhibitors, the fair is the culmination of up to two years of work raising and preparing their animals, growing the best

possible vegetables, quilt making or a variety of other arts and crafts.

The open class (non-animal) exhibits move into the Exhibition Building on Monday and Tuesday, and the barns start filling up on Wednesday with check-ins and weigh-ins. The next three days consist of the various shows, beginning with the pigs on Thursday

morning.

Seefeldt said it's always a challenge to meet the individual judges' criteria.

"Each judge is going to different," she said. "Everybody's opinion is different."

The grandstand actually starts getting busy on Wednesday night, Aug. 21, with V-8 mini rods, motor-cycle-powered modified

tractors, and Stock V twin garden tractor pulls starting at 7 p.m.

The Ag Olympics are in the spotlight at 7 p.m. Aug. 22.

"4-H clubs and FFA chapters — or kids who are best friends in the barn — get a group together and do different athletic type

FAIR, CONTINUED ON PAGE 3

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FAIR, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2

events,” Seefeldt said. “It gets all the kids together.”

The Friday grandstand event is a 4x4 tractor pull at 7 p.m. Aug. 23. On Saturday, a draft horse pull is scheduled at 9 a.m., and tractor pulls get underway at 6 p.m.

For exhibitors, the big events are the formal show at 7 p.m. Aug. 24, and the Livestock Sale of Champions Auction starts at noon Aug. 25.

Seefeldt said the formal show is, in many ways, informal.

“All the exhibitors dress up in costumes or formal wear – dresses and fancy suits – the exhibitors love that, it’s a great way just to unwind after a long weekend, hang out with your friends and enjoy the fair,” she said. “Some kids

HOW DO YOU LET GO?

This reporter, who grew up in New Jersey and never worked on a farm or with farm animals, had to ask Grace Seefeldt, who raises beef cattle for exhibition: How do you deal with letting go when the time comes to send them to auction?

“It is hard. You raise them for two years, they’re your best friends,” Seefeldt said. “My steer this year, his name is Doug ... he is my best friend, follows me all around — he’s a puppy. It’s gonna be hard to let him go.

“But at the same time I know that this is their purpose, it’s their time and I can’t keep them forever ... but I also realize that I gave them the best life out of all of the other beef animals, because they could just be on a feed lot somewhere.”

In the back of their minds, everybody understands, she said.

“Sunday if you walk through the barns, everyone’s full of tears. My first sale I can remember everyone crying. Even some of these tough guys that you know in their entire life, we look at them and they’re full of tears,” Seefeldt said. “It just means that they put the time and effort in, and at the end of the day we know we gave them the best life. That’s all they could ever ask for — they were loved.”

— Warren Bluhm

will dress their animals in a funny costume and they’ll dress up to match it. Last year, my brother dressed up as me to try to be funny.”

Carnival rides are

scheduled to operate 5:30-10 p.m. Thursday, noon to 10 p.m. Friday and Saturday, and noon to 4 p.m. Sunday.

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No county fair experience is complete without a visit to the cattle barns.

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The 2023 grand champion turkey surveys his domain.

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Carnival rides will be running all four days of the Oconto County Youth Fair.

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# 2024 county fair features new show ring

By **WARREN BLUHM**  
News editor

Visitors to the Oconto County Youth Fair in 2024 will see a new and expanded show ring area between the barns.

The covered show ring includes new electrical wiring for future sound system and speakers hookups, according to a post on the fair's Facebook page. The wiring has been buried with the water line underground, and a new underground water line will also be going from the Dairy Barn to the Swine Barn to allow for future water

hookups in the Swine Barn. Grace Seefeldt, who serves as fair ambassador in her role as Fairest of the Fair 2024, said the improved facility has been a long time coming.

"It'll be a great new addition to the fair," Seefeldt said. "I'm excited to show there, and I know others are."

The Oconto County Board in March authorized up to \$44,456 from the county's American Rescue Plan Act allocation to help cover costs of the fair's \$148,188 show ring project, including electric work, new gates and fencing.



The Oconto County Youth Fair will feature a new and expanded show ring area in 2024. WARREN BLUHM | NEW MEDIA



The Livestock Sale of Champions on Sunday is one of the Oconto County Youth Fair's most well-attended events. FILE | NEW MEDIA



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Quilts line the walls of the Exhibition Building at Zippel Park during the 2023 Oconto County Youth Fair. FILE | NEW MEDIA



"If you go up to them and ask, 'Hey, what's your animal's name?' they'll gladly tell you all about raising that animal," Grace Seefeldt says about the youthful exhibitors who raise animals to show at the county fair. FILE | NEW MEDIA



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# 2024 Oconto County Youth Fair calendar

**Saturday, August 17**

|                                                                 |                                      |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 8:00am                                                          | Small Animal/Caged Bird Registration |
| 8:30am                                                          | Small Animal/Caged Bird Show         |
| 9:00am                                                          | Horse Show                           |
| 9:00am                                                          | Cat/Dog Show Registration            |
| 9:30am                                                          | Cat Show                             |
| Immediately After the Cat Show<br>(approximately 10:00-10:15am) | Dog Show                             |

**Monday, August 19**

|               |                                           |
|---------------|-------------------------------------------|
| 4:00pm-7:00pm | Open Class Exhibits (Non-Animal) Check In |
|---------------|-------------------------------------------|

**Tuesday, August 20**

|                                             |                                            |
|---------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------|
| 9:00am-11:00am                              | Open Class Exhibits (Non-Animal) Check In  |
| 1:00pm - Until Completed                    | Open Class Judging (Non-Animal)            |
| 1:00pm-8:00pm<br>(Dinner Break 4:30-5:00pm) | Junior Class Check-In/Judging (Non-Animal) |

**Wednesday, August 21**

|                          |                                                                                           |
|--------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 9:00am-1:00pm            | Junior Class (Sheep, Goats, Swine, Beef) Check In                                         |
| 1:00pm-8:00pm            | Junior Class (Poultry and Rabbit) Check In                                                |
| 1:30pm-4:30pm            | Weigh Ins (Starting with Hogs, Sheep, Goats and Beef to follow)                           |
| 5:00pm - Until Completed | Ultrasounds 1) Beef, 2) Hogs 3) Goats 4) Sheep                                            |
| 7:00pm                   | V8 Mini Rods, Motorcycle Powered Modified Tractors, and Stock V Twin Garden Tractor Pulls |

**Thursday, August 22**

|                |                                        |
|----------------|----------------------------------------|
| 9:00am         | Swine Show                             |
|                | Sheep to Follow Swine Show             |
| 1:00pm-5:00pm  | Junior Class (Dairy) Check In          |
| 5:00pm         | Lane Ludtke Band (By Opening Ceremony) |
| 6:00pm         | Opening Ceremony                       |
| 6:30pm-10:30pm | Homegrown Band (Beerstand)             |
| 7:00pm         | AG Olympics                            |

**Friday, August 23**

|                                  |                                |
|----------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 9:00am                           | Rabbit Show                    |
| 10:00am                          | Beef Show                      |
| 12:30pm                          | Randy Peterson Music for Kids  |
| 2:00pm                           | Mischief and Magic Show        |
| 3:00pm                           | Goat Show                      |
| 3:00pm-7:00pm                    | Ken and Kris Band (Beerstand)  |
| 4:00pm                           | Rabbit Kiddie Showmanship      |
| 5:00-6:30pm                      | Truck Pull Registration        |
| 5:00pm (following the goat show) | Special Drive Swine Show       |
| 5:00pm                           | Randy Peterson Music for Kids  |
| 6:30pm                           | Mischief and Magic Show        |
| 7:00pm                           | 4x4 Truck Pulls                |
| 7:00pm-11:00pm                   | Rapid Transit Band (Beerstand) |



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Reese Windus, left, explains how he raised Gibby to judge Heather Tetzlaff during the cat show at the 2022 Oconto County Youth Fair. The horse, cat, dog and small animal competitions take place the Saturday before the main fair, this year on Aug. 17.

FILE | NEW MEDIA

# Some shows happen early

BY WARREN BLUHM  
News editor

The Oconto County Youth Fair is so big, it can't be contained in a single weekend.

A few years back, some of the competitions were spun off into a separate exhibition that takes place on the Saturday before the main event. This year, those shows are scheduled for the morning of Aug. 17 at Zippel Park in Gillett.

The small animal and caged bird show is set to begin at 8:30 a.m., the horse show at 9 a.m., the cat show at 9:30 a.m. and the dog show immediately afterward.

Registration for the

smaller animal shows begins 30 minutes before the program.

Fairest of the Fair Grace Seefeldt said the horse show is held earlier in part because they need a quieter area so they can hear their handlers, and in part because the fairgrounds doesn't have a stable.

"We don't have anywhere to stall them, so they are stalled in their trailer for one day," she said.

The dogs, cats and exotic animal shows have taken place in the Exhibit Hall, where quilts, baking, veggies and other non-animal projects are housed during the main fair days, so those shows are held the previ-

ous weekend, Seefeldt said.

Over the years, the small animal show has featured creatures as diverse as a bearded dragon and a hedgehog.

"I think it's cool to watch," she said. "I mean, they explain all the different things they do, which are not like normal animals."

The cat show especially can be entertaining, Seefeldt said.

"Cats are very temperamental, you never know what they're going to do, but the exhibitors make it work," she said. "Explaining how they give a cat a bath is very funny to me."

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