

Bring Home the Bacon

Piglets Settle in at Ag Barn
Avery Fulton



Twice a day, senior Lauren Clinch heads up to the Ag Barn located by Memorial Stadium. Every time she visits, she feeds and cleans up after her pig, Buster. "I named by pig Buster because when I first got him he was so small, and when I would go into his pen, he would try to "bust" through the pen's poles to get away," Clinch said.

Avery Fulton
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Livestock has always been a central part of the National FFA Organization. In fact, livestock judging began two years before the FFA was officially formed. FFA members continue to honor this traditional staple of the club, by not only judging, but also showing livestock animals. The most recent animal to make it into the Ag Barn was the pigs.

"I wanted to show pigs because it was something that my

grandfather showed when he was in high school, and I thought it you be a great experience to work with an animal that I had yet to work with," junior and FFA sentinel Cailey Nixon said.

Part of the fun is discovering each animal's unique personality.

"My pig likes to chew on my jeans, untie my shoes and eat marshmallows," senior and FFA co-vice president Lauren Clinch said. While pigs are one of the most cost efficient animals to maintain, they can be more difficult to work with.

"Showing a pig is different than showing some of the other things I show because, with the other animals, you are able to have some sort of control over them," Clinch said. "For example, the goats have show chains around their necks. When showing a pig, the only thing you are allowed to use is a whip. If your pig is not properly trained, it is most likely that he will not obey you, so you have to constantly reward and train him."

While the show team members are in charge of training and caring for their pigs, they are also responsible for maintaining the barn. "We are required to go to the barn at least twice a day," Clinch said. "Each morning, we are required to feed them and change their water buckets. Usually in the evenings, we clean the pens, exercise them and do barn chores. We try to keep the barn as well managed and kept up with as possible, so we have a schedule we follow where each week people are put in charge of different chores."

Some students show more than one animal, meaning they have to manage their time at the barn.

"When I am at the barn, I have to split my time up between my goat and my pig," Nixon said. "While I am on the pig side, I will clean my pen and then walk my pig around the practice arena inside the barn. When I am done with my pig, I head back over to the goat side and clean my goat pen. Then, I halter my goat and walk him around Memorial Stadium."

Since students who aren't involved in FFA rarely get the chance to see any of the livestock animals and the pigs were eight weeks old when they arrived at the barn, the FFA officers planned to introduce the tiny piglets during a pep rally to raise money for Operation Kindness.

"Unfortunately the 'Kiss a Pig' fundraiser we had planned to do this fall wasn't able to happen," Clinch said. "Pigs stress out easily and can have severe medical issues if put into a stressful environment, so we figured a pep rally probably wasn't a good idea for the pig."

- See more at: <http://wakelandaccess.com/student-life/2015/11/04/bring-home-the-bacon/#sthash.w0p8hTM2.dpuf>