

## Fresno Fair changes livestock rules for drought

By Rory  
Appleton



Janay Hibner, 14, of Fresno introduces Casino, her French Lop rabbit, to his new home for his stay at the Big Fresno Fair, as the small animals arrived, Saturday, Sept. 27, 2014. She said he was grumpy.

JOHN WALKER — THE FRESNO BEE [Buy Photo](#)

The Big Fresno Fair is mindful of the drought that continues to grip California, laying waste to farms and suburban lawns alike, and is taking water-saving actions.

Fresno Fair deputy manager Lauri King said this will be the first year in which students from local 4-H and FFA clubs will only be allowed to fully wash each animal once per show session, which lasts either five or six days. This poses a particular problem for the pigs, which don't have sweat glands and must rely on the pavilion's new cooling system of misters and fans, she said.

"We realize the dire situation our community faces," King said. "I realize this affects a lot of kids in our barn, but we have to educate not only them but the public as well on just how bad this drought is."

The changes to the livestock competition aren't the only water-savers, King said. "We have also installed landscaping areas with fewer flowers and more drought-resistant plants, as well as multiple drip systems for collecting and recycling water."

One FFA adviser was less than thrilled when he first heard about the water cutbacks.

"I really wasn't happy," said Rich Vandenack, agriculture teacher and FFA adviser at Sierra High School in Tollhouse. "I thought to myself, 'There has got to be a better way for the city to conserve water, like water lawns less.' "

Vandenack's main concern was for the health and well-being of his students' livestock. "If one of these animals dies, is the fair going to pay for it? Are they going to be held responsible?"

But Vandenack said that he later softened on the new rules.

"It is a good message to send to the kids that you should be saving water any way you can," he said. "There was enough time given to us to adjust, and we can use bottles of water, misters and fans to get us through the show."

Vandenack said that the Valley's forecast played a part in his acceptance. "If it were going to be 102, I'd still be very angry. But it looks like we are going to luck out in that regard."

The 20 or so pigs his students are showing in the newly cooled hog area should be fine, Vandenack said, as long as the temperatures stay in the 80s.

King said that a test run of the new system last week dropped the pavilion's temperature by 12 degrees.

In addition, the pavilion will have a veterinarian on site at all times to administer any care or additional baths deemed necessary, King said. Students also may use buckets of water for spot washing or dry shampoos to keep their animals looking pristine, she said.

King said the decision to constrict the livestock exhibitors was not made lightly. She was adamant about how important the livestock shows, which will feature over 800 animals this year, are to this year's fair and every fair before it.

"County fairs were built around farmers and ranchers gathering to show off their best products," she said. "There's 130 years of tradition here in Fresno that can't be disrupted."

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### **If you go**

Admission: \$10 general; \$7 for ages 6-12, military with ID, and 62+; free for kids 5 and younger.

Fair starts Wednesday, ends Oct. 13

Fair gates open: 11 a.m. Monday through Friday; 10 a.m. Saturday and Sunday.

Fair gates close: 11 p.m. Sunday through Thursday; midnight Friday and Saturday.

Parking is \$5 general, \$8 preferred and \$12 in the Chance Premier lot.

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