

Keeping up with the Joneses

JONES FAMILY CIRCLES AROUND PIGS

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Dedication and knowledge seem to be themes for the Jones family when it comes to their work with their hogs. Every morning the three Jones siblings, Aubrey, 21, Ashton, 18, and Alexis, 12, are up bright and early to feed, walk and train their hogs.

"We're out here every morning at 7:30 and back out here for the long walk at 8:30 p.m. Every day and night," said Mike Jones, their father.

Mike began his career in showing hogs in 2005 while teaching Agriculture at Mercer County Senior High School. The super intendant bought the school a farm to give the kids opportunities to work. "We asked the kids what they wanted to do and they said show. So we got some pigs, put them on the farm and we would hook up a trailer and travel to shows," Mike said.

Unfortunately the program only lasted for three or four years as the condition of the barn started to deteriorate, so the school tore it down. However, after gaining traction with the students, about four families continued to show hogs after the school operation closed.

Despite the idiom, "lazy pig," these hogs have quite the rigorous training schedule. Mike describes their regime: "Two things, one, we do endurance. We want to make sure they are ready. That way if we're at a show and the judge walks them a little longer, they can handle it. Second thing is to listen and lift their head up. And they use that little whip, and that doesn't hurt them, it just gets their attention, and they will start strutting. They look just beautiful."

The walking is not only good for the hogs, but also good exercise for the Jones, "Oh yeah, I've got my tracker on, I can get all my steps

in," said Mike Jones.

The exercise is crucial to keep the hogs at a certain weight. "What people don't understand is that we have to declare weight now for the state fair at the end of August. So we really have to think about where are they going to be. And if they are overweight, you can't show them," Mike said.

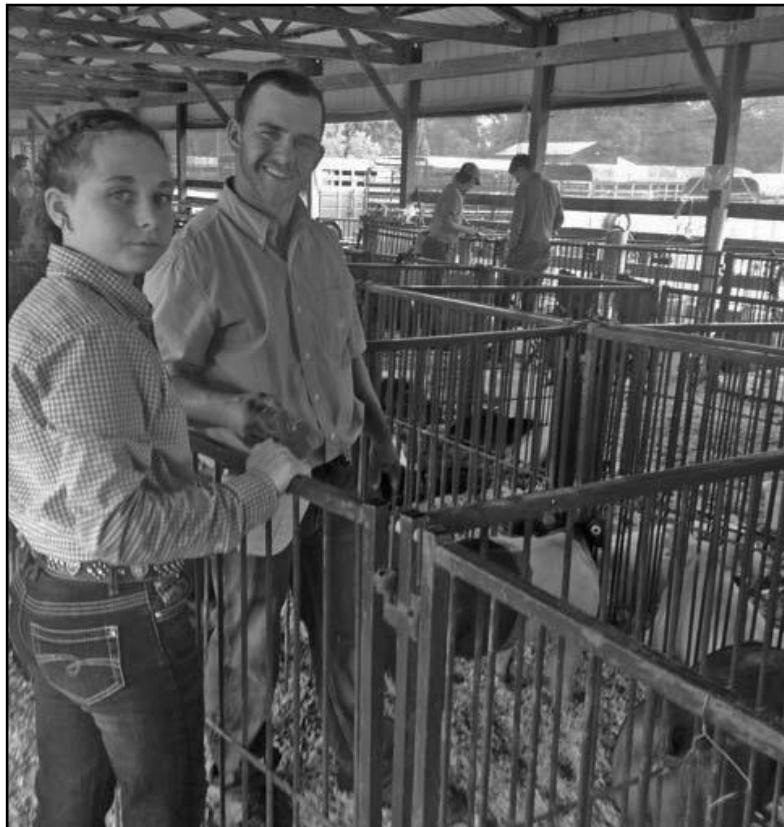
Two of the 4-month-old pigs already weigh 180 lbs and 185 lbs. The weight requirements for showing hogs is broken into categories, and pigs can gain even 5lbs in one day. Which is why weighing and exercising are crucial to make sure the pigs are in their correct weight class.

The Jones have sort of a secret weapon in their oldest son Aubrey,

who is a rising senior at the University of Kentucky. Aubrey has showed for 10 years and continued his work with hogs by becoming livestock judge. He judged in high school and has joined the judging team at UK. He has learned what to look for in the hogs which can help continue to add banners to the family's already large collection.

"You want to make sure they can walk well, look nice, level and square and squareness shows muscle and width," Aubrey said. He has gotten some extra experience through traveling with the judging team to different states including Colorado, Texas and Louisiana.

The Jones family will be competing again this year at the Market Swine Show on Saturday, July 30.



Alexis, left and Ashton, right stand pre-show with their pigs at the Boyle County fair this year.

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