

## County fair to kick off July 9

By Lydia Statz, Union staff writer | Posted: Friday, June 27, 2014 9:23 am

JEFFERSON — For the 162nd year, the Jefferson County Fair will salute all that is unique about this region when it celebrates the “Year of the Steer” July 9-13.

Once again, national headlining acts will take to the stage on Friday and Saturday nights, drawing crowds with the promise of big-budget entertainment right here at home.

Friday’s headliner will be country rap musician Colt Ford, with opening act Jon Pardi, while Academy of Country Music “New Artist of the Year” Justin Moore will take the stage on Saturday after opening act Megan Ruger.

Both shows will take place in the Wilbert Betschler Memorial Grandstand at Jefferson County Fair Park, and begin at 6:30 p.m.

Jefferson County Fair Park director David Diestler said the organization hopes this year’s chosen musical acts will bring in big crowds to compete with last year’s record-setting audiences.

“Justin Moore, he’s got a new album out just recently and it’s hit No. 1 already. He also won ACM artist of the year, so that’s exciting,” Diestler said. “His music is becoming more and more popular, so I think it will be a great concert for everybody to come out and watch ... and Colt’s got his followers, and his music is just different, so it’s kind of exciting and it should be a fun night for everybody.”

Colt Ford is best known for his songs “Dirt Road Anthem,” “Drivin’ Around Song” and “Answer to No One.” Born and raised in Athens, Ga., Ford also is a former professional golfer.

Jon Pardi is making a name for himself as a national act with songs like “What I Can’t Put Down,” “Up All Night” and “Missin’ You Crazy.”

On Saturday, Justin Moore will perform the big show. Fans will recognize hits such as “Point at You,” “Beer Time” and “‘Til my Last Day.”

Moore began performing during high school, and moved to Nashville after graduation to begin his music career. He released his third studio album, “Off the Beaten Path,” in September 2013.

Ruger is a native of Twin Lakes, Wis., who participated in both “American Idol” and “The Voice” before kicking off a tour that will take her through her native state this summer.

Though grandstand tickets to the performances are included in Fair Park admission, a limited number of reserved seats and packages are available ahead of time. Party pit tickets and reserved seats, some including a buffet dinner, are available for prices ranging from \$20 to \$80 and include fair admission. Tickets can be ordered online at



Jefferson County Fair

jcfairpark.com.

However, even if you miss the grandstand acts, there will be plenty of music to go around with performances daily at the Miller Lite Entertainment Tent. Other musical entertainment at the fair will include Madison County, a popular country band based in Madison, which will perform in the Miller Lite Entertainment Tent on Friday at both 7:30 and 10:30 p.m.

Madison County was recognized as the 2013 Isthmus Madison's "Favorite Local Country Group," as well as the 2014 Best of Madison "Best Local Band," and has been the Q106 "Local Group of the Year" for nine consecutive years.

Diestler noted that though country music dominates the main stage this year, fans of rock and other genres should find plenty to keep them happy.

"We try to mix it up. We'd like to do more rock on the main stage, but we just haven't found the right group yet because of cost and everything else," he said. "We're kind of limited that way, so if we get country on the main stage, we try to get some other type of music in the Miller tent."

Other groups to perform in the Miller Lite Tent will include Josh Napert, Rabid Aardvarks, the Now Band, the Jimmy Hartwig Band, Shotgun Jane and the Swing Crew Band. In addition, Megan Ruger also will perform a second show on Saturday, moving from the grandstand to the Miller Lite Tent.

When it's time to take a break from the music, daily entertainment throughout the five days around the grounds will include several old favorites from years past, as well as new attractions.

New this year, Welde's Big Bear Show will perform daily at 1, 3 and 5 p.m., along with an 11 a.m. Saturday performance. These famous bears have been featured in the animated Disney Movie "Brother Bear" and had appearances in the movie "Big Fish."

Pleasure Valley Pig & Duck Races will compete daily at 11:30 a.m., and 1, 2:30, 4:00 and 5:30 p.m, while a Zoozort exotic animal show will be presented at noon on Saturday.

Diestler noted that the focus on animal acts is part of the fair's emphasis on bringing a wide variety of family-friendly attractions throughout the week for fairgoers of all ages to enjoy.

The Ag Adventure Tent will be open from 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. every day to provide educational opportunities to learn about agriculture, and a group called LogHoggers will be carving logs into spectacular designs throughout each day. Its works then will be auctioned off on the final day of the fair.

In addition, The LogHoggers will hold a speed-carving competition at 5:30 p.m. on Wednesday, Thursday and Friday.

Returning as an old favorite is the Badger Woodturners group, which will demonstrate the craft and sell beautiful handmade pieces. There will be a new twist this year, however.

"We've had the Badger Woodturners here for quite a few years, but now we have a gentleman who's coming who makes the old-fashioned carved wooden shoes, the Dutch-type shoes," Diestler said. "I believe he's one of the few in the country who still does it."

Nonstop entertainment on the Kids' Stage includes Hoo's Woods Birds of Prey, The Magic of Jim Mitchell, and Grandpa Cratchet's Puppet Show, which also will be driving around the fairgrounds between shows at the stage.

Opening day of the fair on Wednesday, July 11, also will be Kids' Day, with the first 1,000 children through the Jefferson County Fair Park gates receiving a free gift. Admission for children age 12 and under also will be free until 5 p.m.

The week's entertainment kicks off with the County Tractor Pull Wednesday morning, with the competition in all classes beginning at 10:30 a.m.

A longstanding tradition that benefits the Helenville Fire Department, Bingo will take place in the Pavillion from 1 to 4 p.m. on Wednesday, Thursday and Friday. Cards will be 50 cents or three for a dollar, and cash prizes will be paid out for each game.

Food Network addicts can get their fix in the Jones Dairy Tent at 2:30 p.m. by viewing "Cooking Show Live!," featuring Palmyra favorite Rushing Waters Fisheries, as they demonstrate new techniques and recipes to try at home.

This is the second year for that particular event, and Diestler said he hopes it provides a unique, educational experience.

"We've been kind of working with Jones to come up with different recipes, we wanted them to make something with some kind of Jones product in it ...They'll have a recipe there, and if people want to take the recipe back they can. It'll be kind of exciting and something different to do." he said.

Josh Napert will start the week's musical entertainment off in the Miller Lite Entertainment Tent at 5 p.m., followed by more music at 6:30.

Later, at 7 p.m. Wednesday, the Badger State Tractor Pull will feature tractors not found on any farm fields as they race to the end of the grandstand track, while DJ Dylan provide's the night's closing musical entertainment in the Miller Lite tent.

On Thursday, the event's second day, fair devotees would do well to wake up early, as admission before 5 p.m. is only \$5 per person.

Bingo again will take place in the Puller's Saloon from 1 to 4 p.m., while the local Jimmy Hartwig Band performs in the Miller Lite Entertainment Tent at 2 p.m, just before the Cooking Show Live! demonstration at 2:30, this time led by Augie's Elite Cuisine.

The live music continues at 5 p.m. when Josh Napert performs again in the Miller Lite Tent, followed by the Badger Truck Pull at 6:30 p.m. in the grandstand, where Jefferson County truck owners will try their luck against the "Eliminator" on the 300-foot track.

The Rabid Aardvarks, a cover band performing current pop and country hits, will be the night's final performer on the Miller Lite stage at 7:30.

The weekend really kicks off on Friday, when the half-price admission special continues and fair tickets are only \$5 for all who enter before 5 p.m.

The day's entertainment kicks off with the Draft Horse Halter Judging in the Draft Horse Arena at 11 a.m., followed by another day of Bingo in the Pavilion from 1 to 4 p.m.

Another edition of "Cooking Show Live!" will be featured in the Jones Dairy Farm Tent, led again by Rushing Waters, at 2:30 p.m., followed by a performance by The Now Band, a classic rock cover group, in the Miller Lite Tent at 5 p.m. to kick off what the fair is billing as its "do-not-miss musical night."

"We're trying to sell it as kind of a party night, because we start it off with the Now Band doing classic rock, and then we go to John Pardi, and in between Madison County, and then Colt Ford will come on and then Madison County will come on at the end," Diestler said. "You can go see a lot of bands, and hear a lot of music, just relax and have a good time."

The draft horses return for a second showcase during the Draft Horse Cart judging at 5:30 p.m.

Headliners Colt Ford and Jon Pardi are sure to wow the crowds on the main stage beginning at 6:30, drawing crowds Fair organizers hope will compete with the record-breaking turnouts of years past.

Although grandstand seating is included with Fair Park admission, a limited number of reserved seats and VIP Packages are available prior to the show for those who wish to reserve special seats. For the Friday performance, reserved seats are \$10-25, Party Pit standing room tickets are \$25, while VIP Packages, including a buffet dinner, are \$55-60.

Competing with the grandstand shows, however, will be popular local band Madison County, performing two shows in the Miller Lite Tent Friday night. It will take to the side stage at 7:30 and 10:30 p.m., likely drawing significant crowds, as well, to its award-winning show.

Saturday will see the culmination of the 47th Meat Animal Project with the large and small meat animal sales, broadcast live by WFAW Radio. This is an educational experience for Jefferson County-area 4-H and FFA members who raise animals through the entire process and learn the value of the animal in today's market.

Bids are taken on price per pound for beef, lamb, poultry, goats and rabbits. The youth members are responsible for inviting bidders to attend the sale and bid on their animals, to walk away with a new freezer full of meat. Proceeds of the sale stay with the exhibitor and MAP committee to fund further educational programs.

The Dairy Honors Auction will take place in the MAP Arena at 10:30 a.m, while the large animal auction will follow at 1 p.m.

The afternoon will be filled with musical entertainment, as the Barn Cat Boogie Band takes to the Miller Lite stage at 1 p.m., followed by local favorite Shotgun Jane at 4.

The small meat animal sale will take place in the MAP arena at 5 p.m., and then the draft horses will return for another show with Draft Horse hitch judging at 5:30 p.m. in the Draft Horse arena, followed by the final headlining musical act of the week in the grandstand.

Opener Megan Ruger takes the stage in the grandstand at 6:30, followed by national act Justin Moore. Ruger then will perform a second show Saturday night at the Miller Lite Tent at 10:00 p.m., following local act Shotgun Jane who performs in the tent at 7.

Sunday at the Fair will be Celebrate Freedom Day, with all current or former members of the armed forces receiving free admission with a valid military ID. To commemorate the occasion, there will be a special flag-folding ceremony prior to the demolition derby in the grandstand at noon.

Slightly changed this year, the Fairest of the Fair will be crowned on Sunday instead of the traditional Wednesday evening ceremony.

Three Jefferson County women are vying for the Fairest of the Fair crown. Morgan Stendel of Jefferson, Olivia Peter of Lake Mills and Cierra Ehrke-Essock of Fort Atkinson will compete for the chance to represent the county for the next year at promotional and media events.

The Fairest of the Fair title currently is held by Caitlyn Gerlach of Palmyra.

The final questions in the Fairest of the Fair competition will take place in the Activity Center at 10:30 a.m. on Sunday, with the winner crowned at 12:30 p.m. following that final stage in the competition.

The 4-H Dress Review will take place at 1 p.m. in the Activity Center, at the same time the Action Auto Demolition Derby is getting under way outside in the grandstand.

In the beginning heats, area residents compete to see who can do the most damage to their junkers.

Drivers in the proper safety gear will roll out in their coupes, minivans and station wagons to bang, smash and spin to their heart's content, attempting to qualify for the finals at 4:30 p.m.

In between, during the afternoon, fairgoers can enjoy the Swing Crew band in the Miller Lite Tent at 1, and the LogHoggers Chainsaw Carvings auction at 3:30, when the carvings created throughout the week will be sold.

Gates for the Fair open daily at 8 a.m., and regular admission is \$10 daily, with children under age 5 admitted free.

A number of specials run throughout the event's five-day stretch, cutting down the price.

Entrance is half-price on Wednesday, Thursday and Friday before 5 p.m., and a family five-pack of tickets can be purchased through Tuesday, July 8, for \$35.

The carnival kicks off at noon each day, and closes at 10 p.m. Wednesday and Thursday; 11 p.m. Friday and Saturday; and 6 p.m. Sunday. Rides are not included in the regular admission price.

A wristband for unlimited carnival rides can be purchased for \$15 on Wednesday, from noon to 5 p.m.; for \$25 on Thursday from noon to 10 p.m., Friday from noon to 11 p.m. and Saturday from noon to 11 p.m.; and for Sunday from noon to 6 p.m.

For more information on the Jefferson County Fair, visit [jcfairpark.com](http://jcfairpark.com) or call the Fair Park Office at (920) 674-7148.