

Mother Nature a fair-weather friend

By Lydia Statz, Union staff writer | Posted: Friday, July 11, 2014 9:41 am

JEFFERSON — Mother Nature has been a fair-weather friend, joining a host of fun and interesting activities to draw crowds to Jefferson this week.

The sunny skies and temperatures in the seventies helped bring residents streaming through the gates as the 162nd edition of the Jefferson County Fair kicked off this week. And officials were looking for more of the same as the fair was heading into the weekend.

The official attendance for Wednesday's opening day lagged a bit behind last year's, with 8,773 crossing into the grounds Wednesday. That was down approximately 400 from a year ago's count, but fair officials didn't let that count get them down.

"It was a little less than last year, but we broke a record last year. It was packed yesterday; there were a lot of kids and families here," said Jefferson County Fair Park director Dave Diestler. "A lot of the shows were well attended."

Attendance was good Thursday, though no headcount was available by presstime.

The first few days' biggest attractions included the Badger State Tractor Pull, which packed the grandstand Wednesday night, and bands in the Miller Lite Entertainment Tent. This year, tractor and truck pull spectators were able to get multiple vantage points of all the action.

"We put a Jumbotron over there, so people could watch the screen and the track," Diestler said. "It was something new and kind of different."

However, although the polka fans of the Jimmy Hartwig Band might not have noticed, the musical entertainment after that three-hour show hit a slight hiccup when Josh Napert, who was scheduled to perform both Wednesday and Thursday, fell ill and wasn't able to perform.

"He's from Milton, but he lives in Nashville right now, trying to make it as a star. He came back for this and got sick over the weekend," said Diestler.

Friday and Saturday night's big draw will be the national headlining bands on the main stage, for which tickets are still available.

"We're not quite sold out yet; we're working on that. It's been steady, and we're getting calls all the time of people looking for tickets," said Diestler.



FAIR FUN

FAIR FUN — Two days of the 162nd Jefferson County Fairs already have passed, with good weather and a variety of activities pulling in crowds from all over the county. For more photos [click here](#).

Music fan or not, he said, there's plenty to keep fair-goers busy for three more days.

"There's lots to do, lots of great food, there were lines for the carnival rides even, which was great," Diestler said. "There's lots to see out here for every age from the elderly to little kids."

Tonight's headliner will be country "hick hop" 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.

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 jcfairpark.com.

Madison County, a popular country band based in Madison, will perform in the Miller Lite Entertainment Tent at both 7:30 and 10:30 tonight. 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 performs 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 compete daily at 11:30 a.m., and 1, 2:30, 4:00 and 5:30 p.m, while a Zoozort exotic animal show is to be presented at noon on Saturday.

The Ag Adventure Tent is 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.

Also on hand is the Badger Woodturners group, which will demonstrate the craft and sell beautiful handmade pieces. 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 is driving around the fairgrounds between shows at the stage.

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.

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 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. The finals start 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.

The carnival kicks off at noon each day, and closes at 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 \$25 today through 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 or call the Fair Park Office at (920) 674-7148.