

Attendance pleases fair organizers

By Amy Smith, Union staff writer | Posted: Monday, July 14, 2014 10:27 am

JEFFERSON — Rain proved too large a match for the previous two-straight record-breaking years at the Jefferson County Fair.

American Country Music's New Artist of the Year Justin Moore and Voice contestant Megan Ruger took the grandstand stage Saturday despite the downpour, drawing 10,116 people to the Jefferson County Fair throughout the day. This year's figure falls significantly behind last year's record-breaking attendance of 16,553 for Saturday's presentation of Little Big Town and local favorite Madison Country.

"I think we would have hit 14,000 if not for the rain," said Amy Listle, fair administrative assistant.

Moore played to a jam-packed, wet and mud-ridden grandstand stage, but Listle said she believes low attendance numbers were caused by those who did not pay extra for reserved seats.

"The people that paid for reserved seats showed up," she added. "We were selling seats up until the last minute."

With the poor weather forecast, Listle said staff was prepared for customers requesting ticket refunds for the concert, but Moore played his entire set straight through the downpour.

"He was happy to be here and happy to see everyone out there," Listle said.

A downpour also preceded Moore's opening number, leaving mud and standing water in and around the grandstand stage. While some in attendance were prepared with umbrellas, ponchos and cowboy boots, many braved the weather in their summer apparel.

"Crews found about 40 flip-flops this morning," Listle said Sunday afternoon. "They joked, 'we could start a shoe shop with all the shoes we found.'"

Fair officials also faced lightning concerns prior to the headlining concert but took precautions, and found the lightning was not close enough to the area to be a problem. But besides Saturday's lower than normal attendance numbers, fairer weather conditions earlier in the week resulted in on-track numbers Wednesday through Friday.

"The weather worked to our advantage because it was cooler earlier in the week," said Dave Diestler, Jefferson County Fair Park director.

"On Friday we were on pace to match last year," he said. "We were actually ahead." Total attendance numbers for Wednesday through Saturday added up to 37,184 with approximately 8,773 in attendance Wednesday, 9,010 Thursday and 9,285 Friday. Attendance numbers for Sunday were not available at deadline.



A FAIR TIME

Thousands came to Jefferson over the past five days to enjoy the sights and sounds of the 162nd Jefferson County Fair. For more photos slick [here](#).

The fair kicked off Wednesday with the always popular Kids' Day, and the County and Badger State Tractor Pull.

Diestler said lines probably were the longest Wednesday with all of the children riding the carnival rides. The most popular acts throughout the week, according to Listle, were Welde's Big Bear Show, the Grandpa Cratchet Puppet Show, and Pleasure Valley Pig and Ducks Races.

The attractions, which all were new to the fair this year, drew large crowds each day, Listle noted.

"It's always the new stuff that gets the attention," Diestler said. "And people always like the big animal acts, and, of course, everyone loves the carnival."

Other popular attractions included the new kids' entertainment stage that featured three rotating acts. This year fair organizers tried to break the fair into two groups — one for family entertainment and another for evening adult entertainment, the fair director said.

"We try to hit every age group," Diestler added.

Adult entertainment led off Friday with the fair's presentation of hick-hop artist Colt Ford and country up-and-comer Jon Pardi.

Local favorite Madison County also provided musical entertainment Friday, which helped raise attendance numbers from last year by nearly 1,800 people.

"We seem to get one really popular artist and then someone that's not quite as popular because our budget doesn't allow for it, but it (attendance) was better than last year," Diestler said in regard to Friday's concert.

Weather cleared Sunday to draw another large crowd as the day kicked off with a Celebrate Freedom Ceremony. Veterans participated in a flag-folding ceremony while explaining the significance of the flag and the National Anthem.

The ceremony was preceded by a special color guard march along the fairgrounds Main Street, which drew attention and respect from all fair-goers.

Crowning of the 2015 Jefferson County Fairest of the Fair Olivia Peter followed the special ceremony. Three women were vying for the public relations position.

The Action Auto Demo Derby concluded this year's fair events, drawing its usual large crowds.