

Alex, Norman taking a walk to county fair

By Alexa Zoellner Union staff writer | Posted: Tuesday, July 7, 2015 9:31 am

COLD SPRING — A 13-year-old versus a 14-month-old in a battle of strength. You would think the 90-pound teenager would win easily. Just one problem — the 14-month-old is a 900-pound Red Angus steer.

Alex Partoll has raised the steer, Norman, since he was orphaned shortly after birth and, every morning, he prepares for the Jefferson County Fair by doing something one normally wouldn't do with cattle.

He takes Norman on a quarter- to half-mile walk down the road from Partoll Farm in the Town of Cold Spring, where Norman lives.

“Usually in the barn, Norman is pretty stubborn, but once he gets outside and out of the farm area on the road, he does really good,” Alex said.

According to Alex, the reactions of passersby are varied.

“Some people have been just waving; some people have been almost going into a ditch,” he said.

The walk became a daily ritual once Fort Atkinson Middle School let out for the summer. During the school year, the walks were mainly reserved for weekends.

“My dad said I was taking Norman to the Jefferson County Fair, so he convinced me to (take him on walks) down the road since the fair was getting kind of close,” Alex said.

Alex is the third generation at the Partoll Farm, which has existed since 1955, and is the second generation to enter the fair.

“We used to walk Norman around here all the time, but I told Alex that when I was young, that (walking down the road is) what I did,” Phil Partoll, Alex's father, said.

Alex will be showing Norman — named by his 18-year-old cousin, Peighton in honor of a steer she once owned and not for the calf in the film “City Slickers” — at the fair on Wednesday, July 8, in the cross-breed class of junior fair beef.

“Alex has never been to the fair before, so this is his first time — he's kind of green at it. He doesn't really know what to expect,” said Phil. “Alex hasn't really done anything besides walk him to prepare for the fair. He has never taken a showmanship class or anything, so he's just going on and, hopefully, Norman follows him down in the ring



HERE'S THE BEEF

HERE'S THE BEEF — Alex Partoll, 13, of Cold Spring, has an unusual habit of taking his 900-pound Red Angus steer, Norman, on daily walks down the road to prepare for the Jefferson County Fair. Alex weighs roughly 90 pounds; Norman is 10 times that. Shown above is Alex holding Norman's lead as they prepare for their half-mile walk. Norman thinks Alex is his mother and will even start bellowing if Alex leaves him. For more photos, click [here](#). — Union photos by Alexa Zoellner.

pretty good.”

Phil described the experience as “surreal” for his son because he doesn’t know what to expect, and Alex agreed that there are some mixed emotions.

“I’m a little bit nervous, but I’m excited to show him,” said Alex.

However, it is something Alex has been preparing for since he began to raise Norman when the calf was only a few days old.

“His mom was a little bit crazy,” Alex recalled. “She kept breaking stuff, tearing through fences and then she started attacking her calf, which was Norman. Then after that she started attacking us on the vehicles. So we finally had to put her in a pen and get rid of her.”

That was when his father told Alex he had his fair project.

“Alex became basically the caregiver of this orphaned calf and he raised it on a bottle,” June Partoll, Alex’s grandmother and owner of Partoll Farm, said. “Sometimes when you put Norman out, it’s like, ‘why is he bellowing?’ and it’s because Alex left him. Alex has been Norman’s mom since he was born.”

The roughly 450-acre Partoll Farm raises anywhere between 60 and 80 cows, calves and steers. Currently there are about 25 cows, 20 calves and the rest steers.

There have been animals on the Partolls’ farm for years, but this is an unusual situation, according to June.

“I just laugh when I see them going down the road,” she said. “Alex talks to him and they just walk up and down the road. He takes care of Norman — he’s his buddy.”