

Date of Hearing: April 24, 2024

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE
Esmeralda Soria, Chair
AB 3053 (Kalra) – As Amended April 17, 2024

SUBJECT: State-supported fairs: exhibits: regulations

SUMMARY: This bill requires the California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) to prescribe regulations for the entry of junior exhibits, related to withdrawal of junior exhibit entities. Specifically, *this bill*:

- 1) Requires CDFA to prescribe regulations for the entry of junior exhibits, related to withdrawal of junior exhibit entities.
- 2) Requires that all junior exhibit entries be received only with the approval of a parent or guardian and to authorize those entries to be withdrawn at the request of the parent or guardian at any time up until the moment the animal is sold at auction or the exhibiter is no longer responsible for the care of the animal, whichever is later, as specified.
- 3) Requires that, in the case of a junior livestock exhibit, any bidder may elect for live animal pickup, regardless of any characterization as a terminal sale. Requires any winning bidder who elects live animal pickup to adhere to the procedures of the fair for live animal pickup.
- 4) Requires, if junior livestock exhibit is withdrawn, the parent or guardian to be responsible to the fair for any reasonable costs of facilitating the withdrawal of the exhibit.

EXISTING LAW: Requires CDFA have regulations for judging exhibits and the maximum amount of premiums paid for exhibits.

FISCAL EFFECT: Unknown.

COMMENTS: 4-H is a U.S.-based network of youth organizations whose mission is "engaging youth to reach their fullest potential while advancing the field of youth development". Its name is a reference to the occurrence of the initial letter H four times in the organization's original motto head, heart, hands, and health. The organization is administered by the National Institute of Food and Agriculture of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). There are 4-H organizations in over 50 countries.

4-H is delivered by Cooperative Extension, a community of more than 100 public universities across the nation that provides experiences where young people learn by doing. For more than 100 years, 4-H has welcomed young people of all beliefs and backgrounds, giving kids a voice to express who they are and how they make their lives and communities better.

4-H participants do not have to choose a market animal project. Fair participation is not even required. The nonprofit program, administered by state land-grant universities, offers more than 100 different "learn by doing" projects, with members enrolling in at least one each year. Projects range from tree planting, dance and public speaking to STEM (Science, Technology,

Engineering and Math education). Animal projects include breeding, fiber, horse showmanship and more. However, 4-H is best known for its youth livestock program.

A 2020 analysis by the University of California Cooperative Extension states that market-animal projects produce significant, positive effects on 4-H enrollment. Each beef project contributed nearly four new members to county enrollment; a single sheep project yielded just over two new members; and two new swine projects produced a single new enrollment.

In California, junior livestock exhibitions are governed by the Fairs and Exhibitions branch of CDFA. According to CDFA rules, a fair can require any animal that has been entered into a market competition and qualified by a market judge to then be entered into a terminal auction that ends with the animal's slaughter. Currently, there is no way to revoke an animal from a market competition after the animal has been entered into the auctions, and its buyer cannot choose to take it home alive.

The California State Rules are comprised annually, following a meeting of the State Rules Committee (Committee). The committee is made up currently of 14 members most of who are representatives of various fairs, youth organizations such as 4-H, Future Farmers of America and the State Grange, and, a veterinarian. The State Rules are considered the minimum qualifications that each fairground within the network of California Fairs must abide by and establish via Local Rules. Annually, the individual fair boards review and approval the exhibitor handbook which is the set of local rules governing exhibits and livestock. The Local Rules can be stricter than the State Rules, but cannot be less. In the past few years, the committee has made minor adjustments and clarifying changes related to the state rules. None of these adjustments have changed rules around terminal sale, auction, and live animal pick-up in a terminal sale.

According to the author, these rules do not reflect evolving attitudes regarding animal welfare. Some of the families that participate in youth agricultural programs grow to appreciate the individuality of the animals they raise and do not want to subject them to a terminal auction. Furthermore, some bidders value their new animal's lives more than their meat and may prefer to take them home alive.

This issue was recently embodied by an incident involving a nine-year old 4-H participant and her junior livestock exhibition goat. After her goat was sold at terminal auction, the 4-H participant changed her mind and wanted her goat to live. Unfortunately, there was no codified mechanism to stop the terminal auction process and the goat was slaughtered even though the buyer gave permission to cancel the sale.

Supporters state this bill will allow junior exhibitors to opt out of terminal sales at any time before the animal is transported from the fairgrounds, and will clearly determine the timeframe within which families can save the animals their children raise from slaughter. Implementing this rule statewide will ensure that the rules surrounding opting out of a terminal sale are uniform across the state, thereby avoiding possible legal action that can ensue when children have a change of heart on the sale of an animal.

Opponents state several provisions of this bill are unnecessary, including the obligation that junior entries are contingent upon a parent or guardian's approval. The current State rules for fairs already require guardian/parental consent as a condition of the exhibitor's participation. Opponents also have concerns about enabling a junior exhibitor to withdraw an animal or for guardian to remove consent at any point before offsite transport of the animal. Not only have the

exhibitors and their guardians consented to the State rules that prohibit this action, but also junior exhibitors are taught the purpose and process of the exhibition, sale, and final disposition of the animals they raise. If an exhibitor does not want to raise and show a market animal destined for processing, they can elect to show a breeding animal.

Furthermore, opponents object to allowing a bidder to elect for live animal pickup at a terminal market. Upon signing the terms and conditions of sale in the State rules, a bidder consents to a fairground holding that livestock until pick up for processing occurs. This bill would conflict with those conditions. Opponents also point out that there are serious public and animal health implications from live animal pick up for market animals, as proposed by this bill. Fairgrounds and livestock exhibits are governed by strict biosecurity procedures, developed, and implemented by trained veterinarians and CDFA. These rules are in place to protect animal health, limit disease transmission, and ensure husbandry and handling practices are followed.

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Support

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| Social Compassion in Legislation (Sponsor) | Love Leo Rescue |
| A Passion for Paws - Akita Rescue | Motherlode Feral Cat Alliance |
| Animal Solutions | Only Sunshine Sanctuary |
| Animal Wellness Action | Outta the Cage |
| Barks of Love Animal Rescue | Paaw- People Advocating for Animal Welfare |
| Better Together Forever | Poison Free Malibu |
| Buddy's Angels | Preetirang Sanctuary |
| California Animal Welfare Association | San Diego Humane Society and Spca |
| Catmosphere Laguna Foundation | Saving Imperial Rescue |
| Cultivate Empathy for All | Start Rescue |
| Foods by Jude | Take Me Home |
| Greater Los Angeles Animal Spay Neuter Collaborative | Terra Advocati |
| Gurrs and Purrs Rescue | The Animal Coalition Group |
| Hanaeleh | The Canine Condition |
| Humane Society of the United States | The German Shepherd Rescue of Orange County |
| Humane Society Veterinary Medical Association | Tippedears |
| Humboldt Humane | Unchainedtv |
| Kesar and Cardi LLC | Westside German Shepherd Rescue |
| Kindred Spirits Care Farm | Women United for Animal Welfare (WUFAW) |
| Latino Alliance for Animal Care Foundation | |
| Little Hill Sanctuary | |
| Los Angeles Democrats for the Protection of Animals | 1352 Individuals |

Opposition

- California Agricultural Teachers Association
- California Fairs Alliance
- El Dorado County Fair and Event Center
- Western Fairs Association

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