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COUNTY FAIR LIVESTOCK NEWS

All around the country this summer you will find youth exhibitors camped out next to their animals in County Fair barns preparing for the event of selling their beef cattle, hogs, and sheep to the highest bidder.

Animals all have a starting weight from early spring and are weighed upon entry into the county fairs. These two pieces of information are used to calculate rate of gain which is a factor considered in judging. This traditional scenario is old news, but thanks to Rice Lake Weighing Systems in collaboration with the University of Wisconsin and Biotronics Inc. what is happening at many county fairs around the United States is cutting edge.

Not long ago, in an effort to qualify the pricing and judging of the livestock, ultrasound was developed to determine the grade of the animal's muscle- a helpful tool for judges, exhibitors and buyers. But, combining the animal's rate of gain with the ultrasound information was cumbersome and time consuming. As Wisconsin fair officials looked for ways to streamline the process of combining the data, they turned to Rice Lake Weighing Systems for assistance.

Joe Grell and Mark Johnson Jr. of Rice Lake accepted the weighing challenge and combined forces with University of Wisconsin Livestock professor, Gary Onan, who performs livestock ultrasounds and Dr. Doyle Wilson of Biotronics Inc., makers of ultrasound software and equipment. What followed was the development of Rice Lake's first software to merge the technologies of Radio Frequency Identification (RFID), weighing, ultrasound and protein identification. With all of these features linked to one program, Rice Lake has developed possibly the finest fair-scale system in the United States.

An animal enters the scale and is identified by an RFID ear tag. The operator waves the wand reader near the animal's head while a computer with Rice Lake's software pulls up the animal's record, including the weight taken in early spring. As the animal boards the Rice Lake livestock scale, the software captures the animal's current weight and calculates the rate of gain. When the animal exits the scale, a quick ultrasound is performed of the loin area and the Biotronics software then calculates the grade of the meat and the percentage of fat-free lean. All of this information unfolds on a remote display for anxious youth and spectators to see. The youth exhibitor is then given a printed ticket record of this information.

It previously took hours crunching numbers and compiling data, but with all of this information in one program, printing a spreadsheet for potential buyers of animal stats is just a click away.

Way to go, Rice Lake Weighing Systems. It looks like you take Best in Show!