

Assembly Bill 3053

Junior Livestock Exhibits: Withdrawal and Live Pick Up

Assembly Member Ash Kalra

SUMMARY

Assembly Bill (AB) 3053 would allow participants in junior livestock exhibitions to withdraw their animals from the exhibit up until the animals are transported offsite after an auction. It would also allow buyers of junior livestock exhibit animals to opt into live animal pickup, even if they participated in a “terminal” auction. These provisions will ensure that junior livestock exhibit animals are not unnecessarily killed if their owners or buyers prefer to keep them alive.

BACKGROUND

For over a century, children across the nation have participated in agricultural youth programs like 4-H and Future Farmers of America. Although these programs offer an assortment of activities like camping, engineering, and other sciences, they are most well-known for giving children the opportunity to raise livestock animals, exhibit them in market competitions, and sell them at auction.

In California, junior livestock exhibitions are governed by the Fairs and Exhibitions Branch of the California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA). According to CDFA’s 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 is, an auction that ends with the animal’s slaughter.¹ Currently, there is no way to revoke an animal from a “terminal” auction once it has been entered into a market competition, and its buyer cannot choose to take it home alive.

However, 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 animals’ lives more than their meat and may prefer to take them home alive.

¹ [2023 State Rules for California Fairs](#)

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

SOLUTION

AB 3053 would allow a junior livestock exhibit entry to be withdrawn by a parent or guardian at any time before the animal is transported offsite after an auction. If a parent or guardian exercises this option, they will be responsible for compensating the fair for any reasonable costs they incur by facilitating the withdrawal.

This bill will also allow auction winners to choose to pick up their animals alive, even if they acquired the animals through a “terminal” auction.

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