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## Ryleigh Locke wins Grand Champion Heifer



Grand Champion Heifer honors were won by Ryleigh Locke of Kountry Kids 4-H Club. Pictured above are grandfather Dale Locke, Show Judge Lawson Mozley, Laurie and Dallas Locke, Abbie Claire Locke (hidden behind heifer's head), Ryleigh Locke and Heifer Show Superintendent Lint Jerrels.



Reserve Champion Heifer exhibitor Gabe Mitchell of the Gilchrist County Buccaneers 4-H Club is pictured. From the left are Casey Mitchell, Briar Mitchell, Show Judge Lawson Mozley, Cynthia Mitchell, Gabe Mitchell and Heifer Show Superintendent Lint Jerrels.

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**Heifer Show Judge Lawson Mozely carefully examines a class of heifers.**

## **Story and Photos By Terry Witt**

**Senior Reporter © March 13, 2017 at 12:07 p.m.**

**FANNING SPRINGS** -- Ryleigh Locke, 9, a budding Bronson cattle exhibitor, won Grand Champion Heifer honors Saturday (March 11) at the Suwannee River Fair Livestock Show and Sale using genes from a bull that died two years ago.

Her father, Dallas Locke, the FFA advisor and agriculture instructor at Chiefland High School, said the heifer began life as a flushed embryo fertilized by frozen sperm from his favorite bull, Northern Improvement.

“He’s been deceased a couple of years. We put some old school genetics back in our herd,” Locke said. “He’s my favorite bull of all time.”

The Bronson heifer was grown on the Locke family farm and therefore won the Homegrown Grand Champion honors as well. The Reserve Champion Heifer was exhibited by Gabe Mitchell of Gilchrist County.

The homegrown competition wasn’t needed because the two winners of the main heifer competition were homegrown.

Ryleigh won Grand Champion honors with her feeder steer last year, an artificially inseminated animal. Most of the family’s cattle are Angus with a few registered Angus with Brahma and crossbred influence.

Ryleigh, daughter of Dallas and Emily Robinson Locke, works hard at being an exhibitor. Hours of work are part of her every afternoon as she walks the steer, washes it and blow dries it.

This routine has helped to tame the animal. She has shown the heifer in eight competitions this year. Her dedication paid off in the show ring Saturday as the sometimes unpredictable heifer walked around like an obedient pet dog.

The heifer was standing in front of Ryleigh as the interview took place. Grandfather Dale Locke was holding the halter. Dale and Dallas Locke said the heifer has been known to get wild from time to time, but Ryleigh knows how to handle her.

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“It seems like every time she (the heifer) gets wild at the house; when we go to a show she acts like a puppy dog,” he said. “We’re always nervous because we never know when she’s going to blow up.”

Showing cattle is a family talent. Dallas began showing his first Angus heifer purchased by his grandfather when he was 8 years old. Ryleigh showed a feeder steer for the first time last year at the same age.

Ryleigh, a fourth grader at Bronson Elementary School, said she likes working with cattle and she will probably be recognized by the school when she returns to Bronson Elementary with her second consecutive grand champion trophy from the Suwannee River Fair.

She said the SRF is her favorite show.