

2 500 learners expected at Agri-Expo Livestock

About 2 500 learners will experience farm life in October thanks to a dynamic agricultural education program at Agri-Expo Livestock, a world-class exhibition of the livestock and dairy industries, from Thursday 11 to Saturday 13 October 2018 at Sandringham outside Stellenbosch.

More than 7 000 primary and secondary school learners from 40 schools visited the expo over the past four years to attend the free schools' programme, supported by the Western Cape Department of Agriculture. According to Johan Ehlers, Chief Executive Officer of Agri-Expo, Livestock creates an important platform for the public and especially for young people to learn more about agriculture.

"Farm life is an experience that few children still have today. Livestock offers many children their first direct contact with farm animals like cattle," said Ehlers. "It is important for us to inform young people about agriculture, especially as career choices, because they are the future generation that will be responsible for looking after the industry and developing it further."

The schools' programme includes more than ten stations where specialist presenters interactively communicate the dynamics of industry and agricultural career opportunities to learners. Livestock houses more than ten different beef cattle breeds as well as the three most popular dairy breeds, namely Jerseys, Ayrshires and Holsteins. Learners can experience the differences in colour, size and shape first-hand and get the opportunity to touch the animals and ask experts about the different breeds.

Four of the stations are dedicated to the dairy industry. Learners visit a modern milking parlor where they see how cows are milked and learn more about milk systems, refrigeration and the value chain. In the Cow Hotel, learners can experience why Livestock is the only show in South Africa that guarantees true comfort for dairy cows. The Milk Producers Organisation (MPO) also presents a talk about the health benefits of dairy, the value chain and the value of the dairy industry.

Learners especially enjoy the sheep shearing activity where they can touch wool and learn to distinguish between different sheep breeds. According to Pierre Vlok, BKB Manager: Wool Western Region, it is essential for the sheep and wool industry to demonstrate the correct shearing and handling techniques and to promote career opportunities in the industry. "Sheep shearing is something that many children do not know. Livestock is a wonderful opportunity to offer a new perspective on the sheep industry and agriculture in South Africa, especially for the urban child," said Vlok.

Other presenters include experts in the red meat industry, the poultry industry, hygiene and food safety, veldfires and the Elsenburg Agricultural Training Institute. The schools' programme takes place on Thursday 11 and Friday 12 October. It is suitable for grade 6 to 11 learners. Booking is essential and

schools are responsible for transport. For inquiries and bookings, contact Claudine Wagner at 021 975 4440 or admin@agriexpo.co.za.

Children can also visit the expo with their parents. Livestock is open daily from 08:00 to 18:00 and includes the Groot Plaasproe with food stalls and various activities for the whole family. Children can meet more than 300 different animals, visit a touch farm and enter their bunnies for a pet rabbit show. Tickets are available at Computicket and the gate at R100 for adults and R30 for scholars (free on Thursday and Friday). Access for children under six years is free. Pensioners pay only R50 on Thursday and Friday. For more information, visit www.diegrootplaasproe.co.za or follow the Groot Plaasproe on Facebook, Instagram or Twitter.

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