



Fairs ... Or Farm Shows

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Jim Ruen

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When I was growing up, country life revolved around county and state fairs.

Not only were there 4-H and open class exhibits of livestock, crops and hobbies, but also the fair was where you went to see the latest farm equipment and products.

You could walk from one exhibit to another, comparing tractors, chain saws, lawn mowers and countless other tools of the good life.

Increasingly fairs, county and state, are more about entertainment than agriculture.

The Minnesota State Fair maintains the livestock show where I exhibited my Ayrshire heifer 40 years ago. However, the major agricultural suppliers have long since pulled out of Machinery Hill, not that there aren't still many interesting exhibits to visit.

The real action for agricultural window-shopping has become the regional and national farm shows.

This past week, I returned from the New York Farm Show in Syracuse, New York, just in time to catch the Midwest Organic Farming Conference in La Crosse, Wisconsin. Both were packed with window shoppers and loaded with interesting exhibits. Walking the aisles opened up new opportunities with crops and livestock, and equipment and products to help you raise both.

If you are considering moving to the country or already there, check out the local and state fairs, but also watch for news of farm shows in your area.

They are a great place to pick up information, compare products and visit with people who share your love of the country and building a life on a farm.

If you're lucky you may find a new supply of popcorn as I did in Syracuse, or a new tool for weeding the garden as I did in La Crosse. Regardless, you'll come away reinvigorated with ideas for new projects, new opportunities or perhaps that perfect tractor for your farmstead.