



**STATE OF MISSISSIPPI  
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND COMMERCE**

ANDY GIPSON  
COMMISSIONER

## **PRESS RELEASE**

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### **Ag Commissioner Andy Gipson Kicks-off 2024 Dixie National Sale of Junior Champions**

**STATE FAIRGROUNDS, Miss.** – Today, Commissioner of Agriculture and Commerce Andy Gipson kicked off the 55th Dixie National Sale of Junior Champions by recognizing the collaborative efforts of the Mississippi State University (MSU) Extension Service, Mississippi FFA and the Sale of Champions Promotion Committee in making this massive event a success every year. The Sale of Junior Champions is one of the premier events of the Dixie National Livestock Show and Rodeo. During the sale, 4-H and FFA youth exhibitors named Champions and Reserve Champions in the Junior Round-Up, auction off their prizewinning livestock.

Commissioner Gipson was joined by Dr. Angus Catchot, Director of the MSU Extension Service; Abby Dugas, Director of the Mississippi FFA Organization; Kelly Tucker, Chairwoman of the Sale of Junior Champions Promotion Committee; Phillip Morgan, CEO of Southern AgCredit; and Rorey Lemmel, Owner of the Harper & Morgan Rodeo Company. Two Sale of Champions scholarship recipients, Conner Kilpatrick with the Pontotoc County 4-H and Mallory Duncan with the Simpson County FFA, also provided remarks on how the livestock program has impacted their lives.

“Agriculture is economic development in Mississippi. As the state’s number one economic driver as well as our largest industry and largest employer, Agriculture is key to solving Mississippi’s workforce development challenges and getting more young people involved in work opportunities. I strongly believe our ag and youth livestock programs through 4-H and FFA are key. These programs are the best youth development and workforce development programs in the state,” said Commissioner of Agriculture and Commerce Andy Gipson. “We are here to celebrate the culmination of the hard work of these young people. They are our future leaders. If you want to see the future of Mississippi, look at the youth here today. Thousands of them converged on the Fairgrounds in the past two weeks participating in the livestock shows, and today we celebrate the best of the best.”

This year 1,225 4-H and FFA members from across Mississippi participated in the Dixie National Junior Round-Up Livestock Show, showing 2,084 head of livestock including pigs, sheep, cattle and goats.

Several of these blue-ribbon animals will be sold for top dollar in the Sale of Junior Champions. In addition, scholarships totaling \$61,500 will be awarded to 39 students.

“I cannot express how impressed I am with these young men and woman who participated in this year’s Dixie National Junior Round-Up,” said Dr. Angus Catchot, MSU Extension Service Director. “As I have watched and visited with these students over the past several days, some things that stood out to me were their leadership, their ability to communicate and the way they carry themselves. I believe they are going to be productive members of our future workforce, due in large part, to the skills and experiences they’ve gained through their time in these livestock programs.”

The Sale of Junior Champions Promotion Committee has been key to the historic success of this sale for over 50 years. Since the sale began in 1970, the event has continued to grow due to the generosity and efforts of the Sale of Champions Committee members.

“I grew up in the 4-H program and had the opportunity to make it to the Sale of Champions a few times. So, I love being on this side of things and being able to give back to an organization that did so much for me,” said Kelly Tucker, Chairwoman of the Dixie National Sale of Junior Champions Promotion Committee. “For those who may not know, the Dixie National Junior Livestock Round-Up culminates with the annual Sale of Champions. So, it is a very big deal for these 4-H and FFA exhibitors to have made it to this level. And a portion of the proceeds raised today will go on to provide scholarships for numerous deserving students.”

Last year alone, the sale of 48 animals grossed \$456,285, and 39 scholarships totaling \$61,500 were awarded. To date, the Sale of Junior Champions has grossed approximately \$9 million. Since the first scholarships were granted in 1993, over 836 scholarships have been awarded to various 4-H and FFA members totaling \$1,132,700.

“Mississippi farmers are the backbone of our state and at Southern AgCredit, we honor their incredible contributions. We are particularly excited to continue our title sponsorship of the Dixie National Rodeo. This sponsorship goes beyond mere financial commitment – it symbolizes our dedication to preserving our family farm heritage. The Dixie National Rodeo and its related events not only serves as a showcase of our rich traditions, but also provides a platform for our Mississippi families to celebrate their rural way of life,” said Phillip Morgan, CEO of Southern AgCredit.

The Dixie National Livestock Show and Rodeo will continue with the Open Livestock Shows beginning Saturday, February 10, and the Dixie National Rodeo which begins Friday, February 9. To purchase tickets to the Dixie National Rodeo, visit <https://www.ticketmaster.com/dixie-national-rodeo-tickets/artist/848320>. For more information, visit [www.dixienational.org](http://www.dixienational.org), follow the Dixie National Livestock Show & Rodeo on Facebook or call 601-961-4000.

To view the press conference, visit <https://youtu.be/6r53lmumrgk>.

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**Photo attached.**



**Commissioner of Agriculture and Commerce Andy Gipson kicked off the Sale of Junior Champions today at the Trade Mart. He was joined by (L-R) Dr. Angus Catchot, Director of the MSU Extension Service; Kelly Tucker, Chairwoman of the Sale of Junior Champions Promotion Committee; Josi Johnson, Mississippi FFA State Vice President; Connor Todd, Mississippi FFA State Sentinel; Conner Kilpatrick, Member of the Pontotoc County 4-H and scholarship recipient; Commissioner Andy Gipson; Mallory Duncan, Member of the Simpson County FFA and scholarship recipient; Shannon Wilson, Mississippi FFA State Secretary; Abigail Dugas, Mississippi FFA Director; Phillip Morgan, CEO of Southern AgCredit; and Rorey Lemmel, Owner of the Harper & Morgan Rodeo Company.**