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Slaughterhouse opens, dream of a generation

by Brennan Purtzer

After 21 years, Moloka'i finally has an operating slaughterhouse. After Molokai Ranch shut down their facility, the Molokai Graziers Association was formed to aid livestock producers. The Moloka'i livestock co-op came into existence as a result of that association, and finally has the doors open on their slaughterhouse – five years after the facility was completed.

The concrete hallways carry an industrial feel, and the water and blood on the ground reveal the solemn duty of the people who work here.

No one smiles as they end a life, but it's part of the job at the Moloka'i slaughterhouse, where the prize livestock from the 4-H expedition become hamburger patties.

"It just worked out well that we were open for the 4-H students," said Abbey Mayer, Executive Director. The slaughterhouse took in most of the 4-H animals this year. In previous years, 4-H students were forced to ship their animals to O'ahu or put them down in their own back yards.

Those options had been the only ones available to Molokai residents since Moloka'i Ranch's slaughterhouse had closed; Ship to O'ahu or do it yourself.

"They used to have to kill them under the trees," said Sam Pedro, a former skinner at the Ranch's slaughterhouse, currently volunteering to supervise the



PHOTO BY BRENNAN PURTZER

Sam Pedro and Abbey Mayer observe procedure

workers at the new facility.

Petro said it was good that the slaughterhouse would revitalize an agricultural industry for the island.

The facility cost a total of \$2.5 million, with \$1.5 million coming from grants, and \$700,000 coming from in-kind donations.

According to Director Mayer, the three workers currently employed at the co-op are capable of doing as many as 20 hogs or 8-10 heads of cattle per day.

The cost is \$50 per day for hogs, or \$100 per head of cattle.

"Our biggest limitation is our refrigeration capacity," he said.

The facility, which also offers full-butcher services, is not yet certified as USDA compliant, but Mayer says they are expecting that certification to come within the next 4-6 months, the latest date being next January.

Usually the co-op – located across the street from the airport, on the east side of Hikiola – is open from Tuesday-Friday, from 7:30-4:30. It can be contacted at 567-6994.