4-H Beef Project

WHAT’S IT ALL ABOUT?
The 4-H beef project allows you to learn about breeds, selection, grooming, production, management, showmanship, marketing and careers through a breeding or market animal.

» Learn basic principles of animal science and gain life skills, such as responsibility, by owning, caring for and keeping records on one or more head of livestock.
» Gain knowledge of sound breeding, feeding and management practices.
» Start your own herd with breeding animals or raise a market animal that produces a meat product for human consumption.

STARTING OUT:
» Identify different beef breeds.
» Explore the differences between market and breeding cattle.
» Learn proper feeding of cattle.
» Prepare a beef project to show by leading it and setting up its feet.
» Learn how to groom a beef animal.
» Locate and name parts of the beef animal.
» Identify common beef cuts of meat.
» Discover different beef by-products.
» Develop and keep records of the beef project.
» Identify how a healthy calf looks and acts.
» Network with potential buyers.

LEARNING MORE:
» Learn the appropriate handling techniques and housing for beef cattle.
» Identify livestock safety hazards.
» Explore the difference between yield grade and quality grade.
» Learn the various methods of cooking different beef cuts.
» Compete in a livestock or meats judging contest.
» Plan and conduct a beef promotional activity.
» Explore a ruminant digestive system.
» Identify common external parasites.
» Properly administer medication.
» Learn about beef food safety concerns and quality assurance practices.

EXPANDING HORIZONS:
» Help younger 4-H members explore a beef project.
» Balance a beef ration.
» Plan and conduct a beef showmanship clinic.
» Learn how to manage a cow and newborn calf.
» Organize a livestock judging clinic.
» Learn about Expected Progeny Differences (EPDs).
» Explore the technological impacts to beef breeding and reproduction.
» Properly identify and learn to treat common cattle diseases.
» Evaluate meat carcasses.
» Interview beef producers about beef trends.
» Research and analyze how beef check-off dollars are used.

CURRICULA & RESOURCES
Michigan 4-H Resource
http://4h.msu.edu/4h/livestock
» Beef Cow Calving and Breeding Record (4H1340)
» Beef Cow Production Record (4H1339)
» Your Market Beef Project (4H1188)

Curricula — Other States
» Beef, Sheep and Swine Selection and Evaluation (4-H 103R) (The Ohio State University Extension): http://estore.osu-extension.org/productdetails.cfm?PC=2277

National 4-H Curricula
http://www.4-h.org/resource-library/curriculum/
» Beef:
  • Bite Into Beef – Beef 1 (08143)
  • Here’s the Beef – Beef 2 (08144)
  • Leading the Charge – Beef 3 (08145)
  • Beef Helper’s Guide (08146)
  • Exploring Beef Health and Husbandry (08455)

Other Resources
» National Cattlemen’s Beef Association: http://www.beef.org/
FOCUS ON BEEF

Science
» Explore beef behavior; track normal versus abnormal behaviors.
» Understand the differences in nutritional needs throughout a cow’s lifespan.
» Learn about the anatomy of a ruminant digestive system.
» Research genetic differences in beef breeds and current mutations.

Citizenship & Leadership
» Complete a beef promotion presentation during May, Beef Month.
» Provide beef taste testing at a grocery store to promote local food.
» Lead other 4-H members in participating in local beef producer events.
» Start a beef livestock judging team with the help of an adult volunteer.
» Prior to the county fair, lead a beef grooming and showmanship clinic.

Life Skills
» Use critical-thinking, problem-solving and decision-making skills to help you make good decisions about beef project management.
» Keep records on your project expenses and income.
» Practice personal resiliency through successes and challenges in your beef project.

Communication
» Teach someone the important traits in selecting a breeding heifer.
» Design a poster demonstrating how to prepare beef cuts.
» Participate in a judging contest giving oral reasons.
» Share a presentation on the importance of following drug labels.

HOW CAN YOU GET INVOLVED?

» Contact your local Michigan State University (MSU) Extension office for workshops, activities and events.
» If you are interested in a college education in animal science or veterinary medicine, visit MSU’s website at www.msu.edu to explore those majors.
» Visit a local feed mill and see how feed ingredients are mixed, weighed and blended to make a complete ration.
» Visit a local meat locker or local grocery meat case to observe preparation and packaging.
» Compare beef feed tags from different companies.
» Participate in a beef skillathon contest.
» Job shadow with a local beef producer or veterinarian to learn about animal management and health.
» Attend a cattle show to listen to a judge give oral reasons and witness the differences in judging cattle.
» Participate in a regional livestock judging workshop in the fall.
» Discover different uses for beef products and by-products.
» Exhibit or attend local, regional or national beef shows and conferences.
» Consider showing in your county fair beef show.


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