4-H Dairy Cattle Project

WHAT’S IT ALL ABOUT?
One of the foundations of agriculture, the dairy industry consists of so much more than just producing milk. It’s become a sophisticated business, and there’s a lot to learn beyond exhibiting your project.

» Acquire skills in dairy production through ownership and care of dairy animals.
» Learn about marketing, processing, distributing, consuming and using dairy products.
» Practice principles of cleanliness and sanitation in production and care of dairy products.
» Learn nutritive value of dairy products and promote their use.

THE BIG PICTURE

Starting out:
» Learn the breeds of dairy cattle.
» Select a project animal.
» Identify parts of the animal.
» Explore milk production systems.
» Demonstrate how to groom a dairy heifer.
» Demonstrate dairy showmanship techniques.
» Learn to evaluate your animal.
» Explain the difference between the digestive tracts of a calf and of a cow.

Learning more:
» Judge a class of cows and present oral reasons.
» Demonstrate how to select calves based on desirable dairy traits.
» Discuss ethical situations in the dairy industry.
» Describe signs of health and illness in dairy animals.
» Properly identify the components of an animal’s medication label.
» Analyze dairy cattle behavior.
» Judge and give oral reasons on hay quality.
» Compare the digestive systems of a pig and of a cow.
» Demonstrate proper milking procedures.

Expanding horizons:
» Identify parts of the Dairy Herd Improvement (DHI) record.
» Learn about and debate animal well-being.
» Inspect a dairy for quality indicators.
» Explore the various career choices within the dairy industry.
» Perform a California Mastitis Test (CMT) and interpret results.
» Give a presentation on embryo transfer.
» Detect heat in dairy cattle.
» Demonstrate how to detect pregnancy in cattle.
» Demonstrate how to deliver a calf.

Curricula & Resources

Michigan 4-H Curricula
» Michigan State University 4-H Youth Development Dairy Cattle: http://4h.msue.msu.edu/4h/dairy_cattle
  • 4-H Animal Project Record for Beginning Members (4H1457)
  • 4-H Livestock Record Book for Intermediate and Advanced Members (4H1177)
  • Feed Record Card (4H1277)
  • Member’s Personal 4-H Record Book (4H1192)
  • Michigan 4-H Judging Cards (4H1193-1296)

Curricula – Other States
» Cornell University Dairy Youth Recommended Resources: http://www.ansci.cornell.edu/4H/dairycattle/dairyresources.html

National 4-H Curricula
» Dairy Cattle http://www.4-h.org/resource-library/curriculum/4-h-dairy-cattle/cowabunga/
  • 1 – Cowabunga (08161)
  • 2 – Mooving Ahead (08162)
  • 3 – Rising to the Top (08163)
  • Helper’s Guide (08164)

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FOCUS ON DAIRY

Science
- Investigate and compare the different types of milk – whole, 2 percent and skim.
- Observe and record normal behavior of a dairy animal and compare it to abnormal behavior.
- Research the technological advances in the dairy industry.

Communication
- Create and present a poster on dairy breeds.
- Participate in a dairy quiz bowl contest.
- Teach others about showmanship techniques.
- Give a speech on the importance of the dairy industry.

Citizenship & Leadership
- Volunteer your animal for a petting zoo to share the importance of dairy.
- Participate in a dairy promotion event.
- Mentor a cloverbud 4-H member new to a dairy project.

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

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.
- Join a local 4-H club.
- Tour a dairy farm. Try the MSU Dairy Teaching and Research Center, open daily 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.
- Attend a dairy show and observe the techniques of the participants and judges.
- Write an educational article for publication in your local newspaper about a specific topic relating to the dairy industry.
- Participate in a dairy quiz bowl or judging contest.
- Job shadow a local veterinarian to learn more about animal health.
- Attend a state level 4-H dairy event; visit http://www.midairyyouth.ans.msu.edu for many more opportunities.
- Complete a dairy project record book to track your experiences in 4-H.

Curricula & Resources, continued

Other Resources
- The Dairy Site: http://www.thedairysite.com/
- Holstein Foundation: http://www.holsteinfoundation.org/
- Michigan State University Department of Animal Science, Youth Dairy Cattle Programs: http://www.midairyyouth.ans.msu.edu/
- National Dairy Herd Improvement Association: http://www.dhia.org/
- National Milk Producers Federation: http://www.nmpf.org/
- World Dairy Expo: http://www.worlddairyexpo.com/