The 4-H animal evaluation project areas allow you the opportunity to learn about animal selection, evaluation, breed character, production factors, marketing and careers in the livestock industry.

» Learn principles of animal science and gain life skills, such as decision-making, by evaluating and communicating differences on one or more head of livestock.
» Gain knowledge of animal differences and be able to evaluate and select animals based on a desired set of characteristics.
» Increase public speaking skills by learning to prepare a logical, coherent set of notes that allow you to present an effective set of oral reasons.

The 4-H Animal Evaluation Project

WHAT’S IT ALL ABOUT?

Starting Out:
» Learn about the ideal beef, sheep and swine animal.
» Accurately describe an animal and compare the animal to others.
» Locate and name specific parts of beef, sheep and swine.
» Practice judging classes at the local level.
» Identify different beef, sheep and swine breeds.
» Learn terminology associated with beef, sheep and swine.
» Answer questions based on the four animals being evaluated in the class.
» Learn how to organize notes on animals.
» Participate in a judging contest.
» Go to a county fair and watch livestock shows. Judge each class from the stands and see how closely your placings match those of the official judge.

Learning More:
» Prepare and give reasons defending a class placing.
» Recognize significant differences in muscle, fat and structure between animals.
» Differentiate terms used for breeding and market animals.
» Explore additional terminology to compare rather than describe an animal.
» Increase accuracy of questions asked about a class through taking more descriptive notes.
» Explore the difference between yield grade and quality grade.
» Interpret individual performance data and Expected Progeny Differences (EPDs) for selected animals.
» Analyze and make decisions based on which four animals would be kept in a keep/cull class of eight animals.

Expanding Horizons:
» Help younger 4-H members explore an animal evaluation project.
» Present articulate, structured oral reasons.
» Organize a livestock judging clinic for surrounding counties.
» Evaluate livestock carcasses.
» Serve as a county fair sweepstakes judge.
» Plan a local judging contest.
» Organize a fundraising event to be able to travel to additional livestock judging events.
» Serve as an official judge or as an apprentice judge.
» Use performance records to select ewes, gilts and heifers.
» Interview livestock producers about current livestock trends.

CURRICULA & RESOURCES

Michigan 4-H Curricula
http://4h.msue.msu.edu/4h/livestock
» Michigan 4-H Judging Cards (4-H1293–96)

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
  • Here’s the Beef – Beef 2 (08144)
» Sheep
  • Leading the Flock – Sheep 3 (06369)
» Swine
  • The Incredible Pig – Swine 1 (08065)
  • Putting the Oink in Pig – Swine 2 (08066)
  • Going Whole Hog – Swine 3 (08067)
FOCUS ON ANIMAL EVALUATION

Science

» Critically evaluate animals based on structure, muscle, fat, soundness, balance and volume.
» Learn about beef, sheep and swine anatomy and physiology.
» Use data scenarios to select animals based on the given situation.
» Understand differences in EPDs to predict future offspring success.

Life Skills

» Use critical-thinking, problem-solving and decision-making skills to make good decisions about animal selection.
» Recall information and descriptions of animals to use later in a set of reasons.
» Increase public speaking ability through oral reasons.
» Practice personal resiliency through successes and challenges in animal evaluation.

Citizenship & Leadership

» Volunteer to do animal selection presentation during a county 4-H meeting.
» Provide animals for other 4-H members to judge to help reinforce livestock evaluation skills.
» Lead other 4-H members in participating in local livestock judging events.
» Arrange a practice for 4-H members by traveling to different farms in the area.

Communication

» Participate in a judging contest giving oral reasons to an adult.
» Read through terminology to enhance vocabulary used in describing livestock.
» Instruct 4-H members on how to defend their placings of a class of stuffed animals.

HOW CAN YOU GET INVOLVED?

» Contact your local Michigan State University (MSU) Extension office for workshops, activities and events.
» Attend a show and listen to a judge give oral reasons, and witness the differences they discuss.
» Participate in the livestock judging contest at the county fair or fairs in the area.
» Work with a local 4-H volunteer or FFA advisor to start a county livestock judging program.
» Visit with local producers and evaluate livestock in the area.

» Visit a local meat locker or local grocery meat case to observe carcasses.
» Participate in the MSU Block and Bridle Livestock Judging Contest in April at the MSU Pavilion for Agriculture and Livestock Education.
» Participate in the State 4-H/FFA Livestock Judging Contest in July at the MSU Pavilion for Agriculture and Livestock Education.
» 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.
» Attend regional livestock judging practices offered in the fall by MSU Extension.
» Exhibit or attend local, regional or national shows and conferences to learn more about judging.
» If you are interested in livestock judging at MSU, contact the MSU Department of Animal Science, http://www.ans.msu.edu to explore course offerings and opportunities.

The 4-H snapshots are adapted with permission from the Iowa 4-H Project Hot Sheets by Iowa State University Extension, 2011. Retrieved from http://www.extension.iastate.edu/4h/page/4-h-project-hot-sheets.

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