



Michigan 4-H/FFA Livestock Judging Contest

Farm Bureau Pavilion at MSU, East Lansing

Wednesday, July 1, 2026



Pick up Judging Packets - 9 a.m.
Contest Begins - 10 a.m.

Primary Event Contact: Autumn Converse Williams, conver20@msu.edu

The rules and entry forms for this contest may be found at the following sites:

Michigan 4-H Animal Evaluation Program website: <https://www.canr.msu.edu/events/4-h-and-ffa-livestock-judging-state-contest-2026>

Michigan FFA website: <http://www.michiganffa.com/association/>

In the livestock judging contest, participants can demonstrate their livestock evaluation and selection skills, as well as improve their communication and decision-making skills. This contest will include both individual and team competition.

NEW RULE FOR 2026:

- No changes to teams can be made after 5:00 p.m. one week prior to the contest.
 - Individual entries must still be submitted by the June 15 registration deadline, but the deadline for coaches to submit their team assignment forms has been extended until Wednesday, June 24 at 5:00 p.m.
 - The only exception: in the event of same-day scratches and no-shows, teams can be combined to make complete teams if possible.

Rules Highlights and Reminders from Recent Years:

- While the contest is no longer being held in conjunction with Michigan Livestock Expo, the contest **will** still count as an educational experience for the MLE Premier Stockman Award.
- All contestants will be given a blank steno pad to use during the contest.
- **No same-day entries will be accepted, no exceptions.**

ENTRY DEADLINE IS JUNE 15, 2026.

Entries for each contestant must be submitted and paid in full by June 15. The entry fee is \$10 per contestant. The contest will feature six divisions:

4-H CLOVERBUD DIVISION:

This 4-H Division is open to youth age-7 as of **January 1** of the current year. Youth will judge 4 classes and answer one set of questions. This is considered a non-competitive individual division and all participants will be recognized. Cloverbud participants can participate free of charge.

4-H JUNIOR DIVISION:

4-H members ages **8 to 13** as of **January 1** of the current year compete in reasons or questions in the 4-H Junior Division.

4-H SENIOR DIVISION:

4-H members ages **14 to 19** as of **January 1** of the current year compete in reasons in the 4-H Senior Division.

FFA Junior High DIVISION:

FFA members who recently completed 7th or 8th grade compete in reasons or questions in the FFA Junior High Division.

FFA High School DIVISION:

FFA members who recently completed 9th, 10th, 11th or 12th grade compete in reasons in the FFA High School Division.

MLE DIVISION:

This division is for youth that are 8-21 years of age on **January 1** of the current year who are exhibiting at MLE but are not a member of 4-H or FFA. This division is for individuals only; no teams. Individuals may compete in reasons or questions.

GENERAL ELIGIBILITY:

1. Any 4-H member who has completed a post-secondary course related to livestock and/or carcass evaluation is ineligible to compete in the 4-H Senior Division. In addition, any 4-H member that has participated in any post-secondary (university, college, junior college, or technical school) competitive event of a similar nature and in the same subject matter is ineligible to compete in the 4-H Senior Division. However, they are eligible to compete in the MLE Division.
2. Any FFA member who has previously competed at the National FFA Livestock Evaluation Career Development Event (CDE) or won the state-level event may compete in this contest as an individual, but may not be a member of a FFA team.
3. Any 4-H member who has previously competed in the National 4-H Livestock Judging Contest at the North American International Livestock Exposition (NAILE) may compete in this contest as an individual, but may not be a member of a 4-H team.
4. To be eligible to participate in national contests, a contestant must have competed in the 4-H Senior or FFA High School oral reasons division of this contest.
5. All members of a 4-H team must be registered 4-H members enrolled in the same county.
6. All members of an FFA team must be from the same FFA chapter.
7. The top high school FFA team will have the opportunity to represent Michigan FFA at the National FFA Livestock Evaluation CDE in Indianapolis, IN.
8. The top three teams in the 4-H senior division will have the opportunity to represent Michigan 4-H at a national or regional contest. Any interested individual in the 4-H senior division is eligible to try out for a spot on the team to represent Michigan at the National 4-H contest at NAILE in Louisville, KY.
9. MLE Exhibitors ages 8-21 as of January 1 may choose to compete in the MLE Division if they are not a 4-H or FFA member. Contestants in the division can choose to give reasons or answer questions.
10. Michigan State University Extension programs and materials are open to all without regard to race, color, national origin, gender, gender identity, religion, age, height, weight, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, marital status, family status, or veteran status. Accommodations for persons with disabilities may be requested by indicating them on the registration form and/or contacting Autumn Converse at conver20@msu.edu by June 15 to make arrangements. Requests received after this date will be fulfilled when possible.

Recent Updates to Michigan 4-H National Contest Eligibility

The top three teams in the 4-H senior division will be eligible to represent Michigan 4-H at a national or regional contest. A full listing of available contests will be provided to the coaches of eligible teams following the state contest.

Contests may include, but are not limited to:

1. The Keystone International Livestock Expo contest in Harrisburg, PA (usually the first Saturday in October)
2. The American Royal in Kansas City, MO (usually the last week in October)
3. The National Western Roundup in Denver, CO (usually the first week of January)
4. The Southeastern Regional Judging Contest (location varies, usually takes place in October or November)

Selection Process:

1. The first-place team can attend one contest. They will have the first choice from the available contests and must make their selection within one week of the state contest.
2. The second-place team can attend one contest. They will have the second choice from the available contests and must make their selection within one week after the first-place team chooses.
3. The third-place team can attend one contest. They will have the third choice from the available contests and must make their selection within one week after the second-place team chooses.

Teams can apply for funding through the Michigan Youth Livestock Scholarship Fund. Any costs not covered by MYLSF must be incurred by the team.

All contestants in the 4-H senior division who are interested will be eligible to try out for a spot on a team which will represent Michigan at the National 4-H contest at NAILE in Louisville, KY in November. Selection will be

based on factors such as placing at the state contest, county coach recommendations, availability, and age. Youth who are 14-18 as of January 1st of the current programming year are eligible to compete at this contest. Because youth who compete at the National 4-H Contest are ineligible to compete on a team at the state and national level following their participation at NAILE, it is recommended that youth who compete at this contest are in their final years of 4-H eligibility.

National FFA CDE rules require teams to be members of the same chapter.

REQUIREMENTS:

1. Each team can be made up of three or four members. When four are entered, the three team members with the highest scores will make up the team total.
2. Contestants in the 4-H senior division and FFA high school division will give oral reasons.
3. Contestants in the 4-H junior division and the FFA junior high division may compete in either the oral reasons division or the questions division. Members of a team must all compete in either oral reasons or questions to score points as a team. Scores announced will be a combination of the questions and reasons divisions for the 4-H junior and FFA junior high divisions.
4. MLE division contestants can also choose to enter the questions-only division.
5. Contestants in the 4-H Cloverbud division will judge classes 1-4 and answer one set of questions.
6. One class will be designated as a questions class for **all** contestants. For those contestants that compete in the questions division, four (4) sets of questions will be asked. For those contestants that compete in the oral reasons division, one (1) set of questions will be asked and three (3) sets of oral reasons will be given.
7. The **entry fee will be \$10.00 per contestant** and must be paid when the entry is made online. The entry fee includes lunch for all contestants. The fee allows contestants to compete in both the 4-H and FFA division if eligible.
8. After June 15, contestants or coaches will not be permitted to utilize any Michigan State University owned livestock for practice judging sessions.
9. If a contestant is a member of a team, please indicate on the entry form the name of the coach, 4-H volunteer, FFA Advisor, and/or county Extension staff person that will be determining the individuals that will comprise the team. **Coaches and advisors are responsible for submitting the online team form so contest organizers know which contestants to place on which teams during scoring.**
10. If contestants are eligible and wish to compete in the 4-H **and** FFA divisions, this must be designated on the entry form.
11. Preferred dress is business casual.
12. By participating in the contest, contestants are authorizing Michigan State University Extension, Michigan 4-H, and Michigan FFA to record their image and/or voice for use by Michigan State University Extension or its assignees in research, education, and promotional programs. By participating in the contest, contestants understand and agree that these audio, video, film, and/or print images may be edited, duplicated, distributed, reproduced, broadcasted, and/or reformatted in any form and manner without payment of fees in perpetuity.

PROCEDURES:

1. Each contestant will be assigned a number and will enter their class placings digitally into an automated scoring system. **Contestants must use the provided steno pad** and cannot take bulletins, booklets or other notes or material into the contest. Use of outside materials could result in disqualification.
2. If contestants are competing in both the 4-H and FFA divisions, they will receive two contestant numbers and be responsible for entering their placings twice per class – once for each contestant number.
3. Contestants may not leave once the contest has started unless permission is given by the contest chairperson.
4. **Eight classes** of four livestock each will make up the contest. Four species will be represented: beef cattle, Boer goats, sheep, and swine. Both market and breeding animals may be judged.
5. The contest will also include oral reasons or questions on one class of beef, sheep, and swine. One additional class will be designated as a questions class for all contestants. These classes will be designated at the start of the contest.
6. Two minutes per set of reasons will be allowed to give oral reasons to the official judge. Contestants in the questions division will be asked ten questions on the designated classes. Oral reasons will be given and the questions will be asked after all classes have been judged. Contestants are not permitted to use notes while giving oral reasons or answering questions.
7. Contestants will be given 12 minutes to place each class.

8. Breeding and market cattle will not be handled. Breeding sheep will not be handled since they will be judged loose in a pen. If the market lambs are handled, contestants will be allowed 15 seconds to handle each lamb individually. The announcement of any animal that will be able to be handled will be made prior to the start of the contest.
9. Contestants will be divided into several groups of approximately equal size prior to the start of the contest and must remain with the assigned group throughout the contest.
10. **While the contest is in progress, there shall be no talking or any other type of communication between contestants or coaches. Individuals will be given no more than 2 warnings; if a third warning is necessary, it could result in disqualification. Use of electric devices is strictly prohibited.** If a contestant has a question once the contest begins, please direct that question to the assigned group leader or the contest chairperson.
11. Violation of any of the rules will result in the disqualification of the contestant(s).
12. The official placings will be presented by the contest officials at the conclusion of the contest followed by a 4-H awards ceremony.

RANKINGS:

1. Scores will be based on a possible 50 points for each placing class and 50 points for each oral reasons or questions class. With eight classes to be placed and three sets of reasons and/or questions, plus one additional questions class, there would be a possible score of 600 points per contestant and 1,800 points per team.
2. In case of ties, the highest award shall go to the individuals or teams as follows:
 - a. If tied for an individual species award, contestant with the highest oral reasons or questions score for that species wins the tie.
 - b. If tied for individual or team overall award, contestant or team having the highest total oral reasons or questions score wins the tie.
 - c. If contestants or teams are still tied from above, the contestant or team with the most perfect scores per class shall be listed first.
3. Scores for each county will be shared with the coach the week following the contest. A summary of results may be posted on the MSU Extension website and social media.

AWARDS:

Additional awards may be added based on sponsorships; however, the contest will guarantee awards across the divisions as follows:

1. 4-H Divisions:

- a. Awards will be presented to the top ten high scoring individuals overall with a special award for the high individual.
- b. Awards will be presented to the top ten individuals in questions (juniors only), reasons and per species.
- c. The top five teams will receive awards with a special award for the high team.

2. FFA Divisions:

- a. 1. The first place senior and junior FFA team will receive an award.
- b. 2. The top third of teams will receive gold and silver awards.

3. MLE Division and Cloverbuds:

- a. Recognition will be provided to the high scoring individual overall in the MLE division.
- b. Cloverbuds: Participation awards will be presented to all contestants in this division.

4. Other Recognition:

a. Dr. David Hawkins Award

- i. The 4-H or FFA senior team with the most accumulated points (counting three team members) will receive the honorary Dr. David Hawkins High Overall Team Award.
- ii. The traveling trophy will be displayed at the MSU Pavilion and is sponsored by the Michigan Cattlemen's Association, Michigan Pork Producers Association, and the Michigan Sheep Breeders Association.

b. Michigan Youth Livestock Scholarship Fund Awards

- i. **Premier Stockman Award:** All point totals will be provided to the Michigan Livestock Expo to be used towards determining the Michigan Youth Livestock Scholarship Fund Premier Stockman

Awards. Participants must compete in showmanship at MLE and compete in the judging contest or species quiz to be eligible for the awards.

- ii. **Top Ten Senior Awards:** An educational award of \$100 will be granted to the following Youth Livestock Judging Contestants:
 - 1. Each of the top ten contestants in the Senior 4-H Division will receive a \$100 contribution to the contestant's MESP account.
 - 2. The members of the top two teams in the High School FFA Division will receive a \$100 contribution to the contestant's MESP account.

LIVESTOCK JUDGING RESOURCES:
UPDATED IN 2024

A variety of livestock judging resources exist to help develop animal evaluation skills. Below is a sample listing of available resources:

Livestockjudging.com: Sample classes for free or purchase:
<http://www.livestockjudging.com/classes.aspx>

Judging Pro: Sample classes for purchase: <https://judgingpro.com/>

Nebraska 4-H on YouTube:
<https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PL8PMz6vOY3UHRLjCHDIH2WCJLncfGJFh9&si=Vi2bu1xRTn1OGxye>

Sure Champ: Sample classes for free:
<http://surechamp.com/category/judging/>

Texas 4-H Livestock Judging Manual from Texas A&M Extension:
<https://texasyouthlivestock.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/Livestock-Judging-Explore-Project-Guide.pdf>

University of Kentucky Practice Classes: <https://afs.ca.uky.edu/test-your-knowledge-practice-judging>