



Michigan State University Dairy Cattle Judging Team

2025 Year in Review

MSU DAIRY JUDGING MAKES THEIR MARK AT THE NORTH AMERICAN INTERNATIONAL LIVESTOCK EXPOSITION

In October, the MSU and Michigan 4-H Dairy Judging teams traveled to Louisville, Kentucky, to compete at the North American International Livestock Exposition (NAILE). This competition marks the conclusion of the judging season, and for some, the final competition of their MSU Dairy Judging career. Leading up to this event, the teams dedicated countless hours to preparing for their last contest. Throughout the fall months, the students had practiced their judging and oral reasons skills by evaluating dairy cattle at numerous shows and visiting dairies across the country to practice on a variety of breed classes.



Michigan 4-H and MSU Dairy Judging teams at the North American International Livestock Exposition (NAILE) in Louisville, Kentucky.

Pictured from left to right, back row: Abby Thelen, Chloe Steiner, Laken DuRussel, Olivia Black, Ross Kelsey, Austin Preston; Front row: Kelsey Gruner, Maretta Finley, and Gracie Triick.

Their commitment, hard work, and determination paid off at NAILE. The students delivered outstanding performances, achieving their highest-scoring contest of the season for MSU. Many members earned first in several individual placings, while the teams also secured first place across multiple breeds. One of the most memorable highlights of the trip was Gracie Triick winning the 4-H contest while the Collegiate and 4-H teams both earning first place in oral reasons and second place overall, an impressive accomplishment and a fitting finale for the final contest of the season. Beyond the hard work and spectacular accomplishments, the trip provided the students with valuable experiences, life lessons, and memories that will last them a lifetime. Being part of the MSU Dairy Judging program is an honor and an amazing opportunity. For those willing to put in the time, effort, and dedication, the experience brings not only success in competition but also lasting friendships, personal growth, and achievements to be proud of.

Written By: Maretta Finley, 2025 Collegiate Team Member

Collegiate Division



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The MSU Dairy Cattle Judging program was proud to be represented by Maretta Finley (Fowlerville, MI), Olivia Black (Eagle, MI), Chloe Steiner (Mecosta, MI), and Laken DuRussel (Munger, MI). The team was coached by Dr. Joe Domecq, Lynn Olthof, Sarah Black, and Sarah Michalek.

The teams competed in three national contests: The All-American Dairy Invitational in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania; World Dairy Expo in Madison, Wisconsin; and the North American International Livestock Exposition (NAILE) in Louisville, Kentucky.

In Spring of 2025, a team that consisted of Maretta Finley, Chloe Steiner, Laken DuRussel, and Abby Thelen also competed at the Richmond Black and White Days in Richmond, Utah where they placed 2nd Overall.



The 2025 collegiate team consisted of (Pictured from left to right): Coach Joe Domecq, Maretta Finley, Olivia Black, Chloe Steiner, Laken DuRussel, Coach Lynn Olthof; Coach Sarah Black. Photo Credit: Agri-Graphics.

INDIVIDUAL PLACINGS

Maretta Finley

- 1st in Ayrshire, Louisville
- 2nd in Guernsey, Louisville
- 2nd Overall, Richmond
- 3rd in Guernsey, Madison
- 4th in Oral Reasons, Richmond
- 6th Overall, Louisville
- 8th in Oral Reasons, Louisville
- 25th Overall, All-American, Madison

Olivia Black

- 2nd in Brown Swiss, Louisville
- 5th in Red and White, Madison
- 6th in Jersey, Madison
- 7th Overall, Louisville
- 8th in Oral Reasons, Madison
- 12th Overall, All-American, Madison

Chloe Steiner

- 1st in Oral Reasons, Richmond
- 1st in Oral Reasons, Louisville
- 4th in Guernsey, Harrisburg
- 8th in Oral Reasons, Harrisburg
- 8th in Brown Swiss, Louisville

Laken DuRussel

- 1st in Guernsey, Louisville
- 2nd in Jersey, Madison
- 3rd in Brown Swiss, Louisville
- 4th Overall, Richmond
- 5th in Oral Reasons, Richmond
- 10th in Oral Reasons, Louisville

TEAM PLACINGS

Harrisburg, Pennsylvania

- 2nd in Brown Swiss
- 4th in Guernsey
- 5th in Holstein
- 5th in Oral Reasons
- 7th Overall

Madison, Wisconsin

- 3rd in Jersey
- 5th in Oral Reasons
- 5th in Red and White
- 7th in Guernsey
- 8th in Ayrshire
- 9th in Holstein
- 9th in Milking Shorthorn

Louisville, Kentucky

- 1st in Oral Reasons
- 1st in Brown Swiss
- 1st in Guernsey
- 2nd Overall
- 4th in Ayrshire
- 9th in Jersey
- 10th in Holstein

Ag Tech Division



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Abby Thelen (St. Johns, MI) represented the MSU Institute of Agricultural Technology (IAT) in the All-American Dairy Invitational in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania; World Dairy Expo in Madison, Wisconsin; and the North American International Livestock Exposition (NAILE) in Louisville, Kentucky. The team was coached by Dr. Joe Domecq, Lynn Olthof, Sarah Black, and Sarah Michalek

Abby also had the opportunity to compete in the Richmond Black and White Days in Richmond, Utah, in the Spring of 2025.



From left to right, 2025 IAT dairy judging team members – Coach Joe Domecq, Abby Thelen, and Coach Lynn Olthof.
Photo Credit: Sarah Black.



Photo Credit:
Lynn Olthof



INDIVIDUAL PLACINGS

Abby Thelen

- 2nd in Ayrshire, Harrisburg
- 3rd in Ayrshire, Madison
- 3rd in Brown Swiss, Louisville
- 5th in Holstein, Harrisburg
- 6th in Milking Shorthorn, Madison
- 7th in Guernsey, Madison
- 7th in Oral Reasons, Louisville
- 8th in Oral Reasons, Harrisburg
- 8th Overall, Harrisburg



From left, representing Michigan 4-H the All-American Dairy Invitational in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, and the World Dairy Expo in Madison, Wisconsin, were Coach Joe Domecq, Katie Karboske (Ludington, MI), Joey Arens (Portland, MI), Bryce Ritter (Byron, MI), Hailey Mesbergen (Zeeland, MI), Coach Lynn Olthof, Coach Sarah Black. Photo Credit: Agri-Graphics

TEAM PLACINGS

Harrisburg, Pennsylvania

5th in Guernsey
6th in Ayrshire

Madison, Wisconsin

8th in Jersey
9th in Red and White

INDIVIDUAL PLACING

Bryce Ritter

2nd in Jersey, Madison
9th in Guernsey, Harrisburg



From left, team members for the Michigan 4-H team at the North American International Livestock Exposition (NAILE) were Gracie Triick (Coopersville, MI), Kelsey Gruner (Coldwater, MI), Austin Preston (Quincy, MI), and Ross Kelsey (Blanchard, MI). Photo Credit: Lynn Olthof

TEAM PLACINGS

1st in Oral Reasons
1st in Holstein
2nd Overall
3rd in Guernsey
4th in Ayrshire
4th in Brown Swiss

INDIVIDUAL PLACING

Gracie Triick

1st Overall
1st in Holstein
1st in Brown Swiss
3rd in Guernsey
5th in Oral Reasons
7th in Jersey

Kelsey Gruner

2nd in Oral Reasons
9th in Holstein

Ross Kelsey

6th in Holstein
6th in Guernsey

Austin Preston

9th in Jersey

Thanks for supporting



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Thank you to our host farms, sponsors, assistant coaches and major financial supporters!

Assistant Coaches

Lynn Olthof
Sarah Black
Sarah Michalek
Bridget Silvernail
Kristen Chapman
Elizabeth Hyman

Host Farms

Dream-On Holsteins- Lebanon, Pennsylvania
Embarces Holsteins – Lanark, Illinois
Golden Elm Dairy - Frankenmuth, Michigan
Green Meadow Farms - Elsie, Michigan
Jem-Lot Dairy - Westphalia, Michigan
Jeffrey-Way Holsteins - Belleville, Wisconsin
Mil-R-Mor Dairy - Orangeville, Illinois
Mooville Creamery - Nashville, Michigan
Preston Farms - Quincy, Michigan
Paul and Sherry Meyer - Byron Center, Michigan
Ritter Farms- Byron, Michigan
Star Summit Farm - Byron Center, Michigan
Tumbleweed Dairy - Lowell, Michigan
Triangle Acres Brown Swiss – Freeport, Illinois
Walnutdale Family Farms - Wayland, Michigan
Windy View Dairy - Coopersville, Michigan

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