

Date: February 13, 2026

To: 4-H Sheep Project Members and Leaders

From: Kayla Mitchell, Program Coordinator – 4-H Youth Development

Re: 2026 4-H Sheep Updates

This is a quick update on the events that will take place for the 2026 fair season within the sheep department. Should you have questions, please feel free to contact the MSU Extension office at 269-467-5511. **Please note that the information contained in this letter is subject to change.**

NEW for 2026:

- All breeding stock lambs and market lambs designated for take-home may be loaded out on Saturday, September 26, from 11:00 p.m. to midnight.
 - The St. Joseph County Grange Fair will **NOT** require loadout to be done by 11:00 a.m. on Sunday, September 27. There will not be fireworks or rides operating that day.
 - **ALL YOUTH** are still expected to be at barn clean up at 5:30 a.m. on Sunday to tear down gates and clean specie barns.

Reminders:

- Tagging/Weigh-in Dates: Countywide tagging and weigh-in dates will be **Tuesday, June 2, or Thursday, June 4**, at the St. Joseph County Fairgrounds, 5:00 - 7:00 p.m. Market lambs **MUST** attend one of these to be eligible for exhibition.
- **DNA:** Hair samples will be pulled from all market lambs at the time of weigh-in/tagging in June. Hair samples will also be pulled from the Grand and Reserve Grand Wethers and Ewes immediately following the Grand Champion Drives.
- **Possession:** Each 4-H member must remain in possession of their animals after initial tagging/weigh-in. If animal is determined to be in violation by the species Superintendent, that animal will be disqualified unless special permission is granted by the Superintendent and/or MSU Extension **prior** to moving animal to another location.
- All sheep exhibitors are subject to receiving **random farm visits** conducted by the species Superintendent or Assistant Superintendent.
- All breeding stock animals **must be registered** via FairEntry with fair registrations by August 15.
- **Live carcass weigh-in** will be Saturday, September 12, 2026, from 10:00 - 11:00 a.m.
 - **Underweight carcass lambs** will still be processed, but will not be eligible for placing. Carcass exhibitors will still be required to attend hanging evaluation for educational purposes.
- **Lamb Carcass hanging evaluation contest** will be the week of September 14, 2026, at Bontrager's Custom Meat Processing in Leonidas, actual date and time to be determined.
 - Exhibitors are **required to attend** the hanging evaluation unless prior approval is granted by the 4-H Program Coordinator. No-shows will result in disqualification.
- Market lambs **must be rough shorn** before they arrive to the fairgrounds for fair check-in.
- Anyone is allowed to prepare animals for show. However, it is expected that the youth exhibitor **will actively participate** in the grooming of their project animal.



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- All market lambs must be 100 lbs. or more at check-in on **Friday, September 18, or Saturday, September 19**. All sheep will be weighed at the time of unloading. There will be no reweighing of animals. Underweight animals will be sent home at check-in.
 - *Exception:* If a ewe lamb is underweight, it may cross over to the breeding stock class if the exhibitor is dually registered for both breeding stock and market class prior to fair.
- **All animals must be checked in by the exhibitor** or an immediate family member unless prior arrangements are made in writing and filed at the MSU Extension office 24 hours in advance of check-in times at the fair.
- All 4-H Livestock MUST have their **pen stall label cards** above their pen by Sunday, September 20, 2026, at 12:00 noon. Failure to do so may result in a yellow tag.
- **All 4-H livestock members/clubs** will be held responsible for setting up their project pen/stall and decorations before fair, as well as cleaning and tearing down their project pen/stall at the end of fair. Individuals or clubs may be assessed a \$50.00 fine for failure to do so.
- Michigan Department of Agriculture (MDA) is requiring all lambs that are moved off the farm for sale or exhibition to be ear tagged with a **USDA Scrapies ID tag**. Anyone purchasing lambs should make sure the seller has tagged them prior to sale. If you raise lambs from your own herd you should contact the MDA at 1-800-292-3939 to get a premises identification number. Once you have the premises number call the USDA at 517-324-5290 to order your free tags and applicator so that you can tag your lambs **prior to the initial weigh-in on June 2 or 4**. Do not delay in ordering your tags from MDA; it will take some time to receive them.
- Check the 2025 4-H, FFA, and Other Youth Fair Book (Department 6) for additional information and rules.

(Important Dates, Deadlines & Events calendar on page 3)

Important Dates, Deadlines & Events

Event or Deadline	Date(s)	Comments
Initial Weigh-in, Tagging and Registration	June 2, 5:00 - 7:00 p.m. or June 4, 5:00 - 7:00 p.m. (in conjunction with Dairy Feeder Steer and Goat Weigh-in)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> At the fairgrounds Animals must have their USDA scrapies ID tag Only the scrapies ID tag and the 4-H ear ID tag are allowed on the animal All rams MUST be castrated or banded by weigh-in
Carcass Contest and Home Born & Raised Forms Due	June 2 or June 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Due at time of initial weigh-in
Carcass Contest Live Weigh-In	September 12, 10:00 - 11:00 a.m.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fairgrounds 100 lbs. minimum weight requirement
Carcass Contest: Carcass Evaluation	Week of September 14, time TBD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bontrager Custom Meat Processing (Leonidas)
Fair Weigh-in	September 18, 3:30 - 7:30 p.m. or September 19, 8:00 - 11:00 a.m.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 100 lbs. minimum weight requirement for all market lambs
Evaluations	September 20, 8:00 - 11:00 a.m.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This is required for all livestock exhibitors
4-H Market and Breeding Stock Sheep Show	September 22, 4:00 p.m.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Show order: Showmanship, Breeding Stock, Market Wethers, Market Ewes, Champion Drive, Home Born & Raised, Adult Showmanship
4-H Market Livestock Sale (Large)	September 24, 10:30 a.m.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sale Order: Lambs, Beef Cattle, Dairy Market Steers, Gallon of Milk, Feeder Steers, Hogs
Animal Loading & Barn Clean out	September 26, 11 – midnight or September 27, 5:30 a.m. until done.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All members must clean and help put away the pens on Sunday morning!