



4-H Livestock Projects

Experience of a Lifetime

Welcome to the world of 4-H livestock projects! This document will help reveal to you all the opportunities available through livestock projects. Whether you are in the poultry project for 45 days or cattle for 365, you and your family have limitless opportunities. The youth livestock project experience is second to none for “Hands-on Learning”, “Student Engagement” and “Experiencing Success”. These aspects contribute to the unquestioned advanced life skill development at the core of livestock project involvement.

The livestock project facilitates life-long learning. The first step in this journey is the County Extension Office. Your County Extension Agent will personally have the subject matter expertise you are looking for to get started. If you are interested in a project in which the County Extension Agent is not the expert, he/she will help by connecting you to a large network of colleagues that have expertise in your project needs. Additionally, the livestock project has a long history of volunteer support at the county level to mentor your family as you take on this meaningful project.

Hands-on Learning

Raising and exhibiting a livestock project is not only instructional, concerning raising livestock for show, but also serves as an excellent teaching tool to illustrate livestock production techniques and animal science principles. Participating in a livestock project promotes sound livestock production practices. To be successful, families need to start by learning the essentials. Some of the major areas include: livestock/animal health, nutrition, facilities, behavior, reproduction, genetics, selection and handling. From here, students will become life-



long learners of agriculture. Principles learned regarding livestock production will be applicable to the student's life. For example, a student can learn about balancing a

cattle diet with protein and carbohydrates to add or reduce body fat of breeding females. Of course, it makes sense the same student will be able to apply these principles to his/her own diet to lead to a healthier lifestyle. More importantly, the students learn about ethically producing a quality protein source for all consumers.



One of the programs we use to teach ethics, quality assurance, and decision making is “Quality Counts”. Quality Counts verification is required to exhibit livestock at all major livestock shows in Texas. Further, many county livestock associations have implemented similar policies to strengthen local livestock project programming.

In the end, all livestock projects enter the food chain. To ensure a quality product makes it to the consumer's plate, a curriculum to guide best management practices and promote ethically producing livestock projects is utilized. Quality Counts can be found at: <http://agrilife.org/qualitycounts/>. The course includes a comprehensive learning environment where students' character is strengthened through a series fun and educational modules. To complete the curriculum, the student is required to pass a verification exam. The Quality Counts curriculum has received universal endorsement by the Texas junior livestock community.

Student Engagement

The livestock project engages the student throughout the process. The livestock show is not the end of the livestock experience, but rather, a beginning - opening the door to valuable opportunities. 4-H Youth Livestock offers many methods to enhance and grow your experience. As students progress through the program gaining knowledge we hope they will cultivate a passion for sharing. Students share gained knowledge through educational presentations, mentorship of novice 4-H youth, speech competitions and media sources. For some, basic understanding of livestock projects is not enough, and they seek advanced training and competitions.

www.texasyouthlivestock.com



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For those driven for advanced and intensive education, the youth livestock program delivers again. Species-specific quiz bowl competitions teach critical thinking skills and foster teamwork. Skill-a-thons allow students to study and prepare for competitions requiring comprehensive understanding of specific livestock species production.



Livestock judging remains one of the most in-depth learning experiences offered in the 4-H program. Youth can expect to gain better understanding of livestock evaluation, are challenged to think critically, and gain the life skills of orally defending a position and decision-making. Some of these contests provide scholarships for top performing students. Depending on the contests,

our major livestock show partners may award students up to \$10,000.

If you are leadership-oriented, you should consider the Texas 4-H Livestock Ambassador Program. The program is designed for 14-18-year-old youth with an interest in animal science and mentoring novice youth with livestock projects. Students are intensely trained on the campuses of two leading agricultural four-year universities. Youth in this program have shown increased understanding of animal science, leadership development, higher education, and career development. The program provides Livestock Ambassadors the tools to become engaged advocates of junior livestock programs and animal agriculture.

Experiencing Success

Youth are not the only ones benefiting from livestock projects. The program is a family-friendly environment with learning and skill development for adults as well. The livestock project is a serious commitment and adults must be involved for the project to be successful. What the adult gets out of the program varies based on the individual and level of engagement. One parent might see the livestock project as a unique training program,

preparing their child for a career in agriculture. Another parent could be interested in building confidence in his or her child. A father may like his daughter to raise an animal and stand by its quality when she enters the ring. A mother might be interested in her son sharpening his public speaking skills through livestock evaluation and speech competitions. A grandmother recognizes the growth of her grandson as he learns how to handle winning, and more importantly, respectfully work through defeat. In the end, most parents and guardians are interested in spending quality time together engaged in something meaningful.

Success should be about the people, not the livestock. Participating in livestock projects allows a young person to build a credible reputation built on hard work, ethics, innovation and accountability. Should the student take advantage of opportunities, he/she will build relationships with university faculty, industry representatives, livestock producers, elected officials and collectively, people willing to assist in building a successful future for the student.



To summarize, you will not find a project with more opportunities to Learn, Engage and Experience Success. The people involved with and supporting livestock projects are committed to the success of young people. Livestock projects have unmatched support in volunteerism and financial support through premium auctions and scholarships. The opportunities are endless for a project with no equal. All you have to do is get involved. It is a decision that no family member will regret.

