RUTGERS UNIVERSITY
Cooperative Extension
of Cape May County
New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station

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Cape May County

4-H Livestock Program Guidelines

2026 4-H Fair
July 16, 17 and 18

2026 Cape May County
4-H Livestock Program Guidelines

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Prior to the 4-H fair, each 4-H member should obtain the general ***"4-H Fair Guidelines & Procedures,"*** available at the 4-H office. This booklet contains all the information that you need to enter 4-H projects in the Fair for judging and display. Please take the time to read it carefully – it will make your participation in the Fair go more smoothly. This guide includes a copy of the project entry listings for the Livestock Program. Please use those guidelines along with this booklet to prepare for the upcoming 4-H fair.

The purpose of the Cape May County ***4-H Livestock Program Guidelines*** is to provide specific information on participation requirements for Cape May County 4-H members in the Livestock project. These guidelines include the rules that govern participation in livestock events, contests, shows, judging, etc. These rules and requirements apply to all 4-H members and strive to help make activities safe, fair and manageable for everyone.

Livestock projects may include hogs, lambs, sheep, goats, poultry, rabbits, cavies, cattle and any other livestock project except horses.

Through participation in this project, 4-H members will gain knowledge and skills in the following areas:

- Animal Management Practices
- Meats and Marketing
- Feeds and Feeding
- Animal Health Practices
- Fitting and Showing
- Career Opportunities
- Evaluating and Judging
- Record Keeping
- Animal Reproduction and Genetics

GENERAL 4-H MEMBER REQUIREMENTS:

4-H Cloverbud Members: Youth enrolled in grades K-3 as of **September 1, 2025**. For a variety of reasons, including the health and safety of the animal, 4-H Cloverbud members may be permitted to register a family animal that will only be used for a hands-on activity, exhibition or demonstration; not an ONGOING project. 4-H Cloverbud members are **not** eligible for judging or the market auction. Only one animal per category per Cloverbud member may be entered. (Goat, rabbit, cavy or poultry only.)

For the safety of the youth, 4-H cloverbud members are not permitted to participate in the livestock auction or to be present in the show ring.

Regular 4-H Member: Youth enrolled in grades 4-13 (one year out of high school) as of **September 1, 2025**.
4-H members must meet the following requirements to compete in 4-H livestock events (exhibition, shows and/or auction):

- Be enrolled in a 4-H club by January 1st of the current year.
- Attend 70% of club meetings and activities.
- Receive instruction in animal care through a 4-H livestock club.
- Do a public presentation.
- **Submit a completed record book by August 15th for the previous year. Members with market animals must submit an up to date record book for review when their animals are checked in. The books will be checked and returned.**
- Complete four hours of service on the fairgrounds prior to the fair, **not to include Livestock Pen Set-Up Night and club gardens.**
- Follow instructions for entry in the 4-H Fair Guidelines and Procedures.
- Adhere to all health requirements.
- Register all animals through a livestock club with the 4-H office by May 1st.
- Members of new 4-H clubs may exhibit, with approval of 4-H staff.
- In the event of an emergency with a 4-H member owning a market animal that occurs after the animal is on premises, the livestock committee will choose a proxy to handle the animal during the auction.
- Members must show their own project animal in the appropriate showmanship class in order to exhibit the animal in breed and market classes.
- **Open classes are for educational/exhibition/fun purposes only and meant for those members who do not own or lease/borrow the species in a particular class. Not eligible for grand or reserve championships.**
- Any changes must be approved by 4-H staff.

SHOWMANSHIP CLASSES

Novice:	Junior:	Senior:	Open:
1st timer – may not have shown before	2nd and 3rd year of showing	4th year of showing and up Super Senior division added as needed.	For others who borrow an animal to show or are new to the program. Not eligible for grand or reserve.

GENERAL LIVESTOCK PROJECT REQUIREMENTS

The rules and regulations established at the state level by the Rutgers Cooperative Extension 4-H Youth Development Program govern all animal project events and activities. *"Cape May County 4-H Fair Guidelines and Procedures"* and the "*Cape May County 4-H Livestock Program Guidelines"* will govern all livestock project entries and activities where state rules do not apply. County guidelines will be reviewed and updated as needed.

State 4-H Livestock Project Deadlines

4-H livestock project animals must be purchased and/or in the possession of the 4-H member no later than the following dates:

TYPE OF ANIMAL	PURCHASE DATE
Cattle, Hogs and Goats	April 1
Sheep, Lambs	May 1
Cavies, Rabbits & Poultry	May 1

Immature rabbits must be born by March 15. Market lambs and hogs born after January 1.

Livestock Registration

All project animals must be registered with the 4-H office through a 4-H livestock club by the deadlines listed above.

Family Owned Animals

4-H livestock project animals may be owned by the 4-H member or a member of the immediate family (parent, brother, sister, grandparent or guardian.) Only 1 member of the family may use the animal as a 4-H project. (Exception: 4-H cloverbud members) The 4-H member must be responsible for the physical care and training of the project animal to the fullest extent possible. This includes feeding, grooming, training, health care and pen/cage care.

4-H Animal Lease Borrow Program

The goal of this program is to allow youth who may not have the resources to raise/own their own project animal to have this experience through lease or borrow. Through the cooperation of local animal owners, a 4-H member may gain first-hand experience in the management and showing of a 4-H animal project. Forms to complete the lease/borrow agreement are available through the 4-H office. Deadline for filing forms in the 4-H office is May 1. 4-H members who lease/borrow animals **MUST** participate in the care of the animals. The lease agreement will stipulate what the 4-H member's responsibilities are. **No member may show a lease/borrow animal without actively participating in the care of that animal.**

Fundraising

Anyone wishing to conduct any fundraiser for the purpose of a 4-H livestock club or the 4-H livestock committee must get approval from 4-H staff by submitting a 4-H Fundraising Proposal. This form must be submitted for every fundraiser each and every time a fundraiser is held.

Individual Animal Requirements

4-H MEMBERS MUST SHOW THEIR OWN ANIMALS

Market Lambs

- Market lambs to be shown without a halter and lead.
- Market lambs must be shorn and properly cleaned for show and sale.
- All male market lambs must be castrated.
- Hooves of sheep should be trimmed.
- Each regular 4-H member is entitled to enter 1 project lamb for sale.

Breeding Stock – Sheep

- Uncastrated male sheep may be exhibited.
- Breeding stock animals must be properly cleaned for exhibit.
- Hooves of sheep should be trimmed. Horns according to breed standards.

Hogs

- Hogs must be purchased from a certified brucellosis and pseudorabies-free herd.
- All male market hogs must be castrated.
- Each regular 4-H member is entitled to enter 1 project hog for sale.

Goats

- Goats may be shown to breed standards.
- Hooves of goats should be trimmed.
- Uncastrated males are not permitted for exhibit or show.
- Each regular 4-H member is entitled to enter as many goats as space allows provided all health requirements are met.
- Goats may not have horns unless approved by livestock committee.

Beef

- Both heifer and steer projects are acceptable. Uncastrated males may not be shown.
- Beef projects will be weighed with a weight tape or by certified scale.
- All market beef projects must be either dehorned or a double barrier provided.
- Beef projects should be shown to breed standards.

Poultry and Waterfowl

- Poultry projects must have been hatched by April 1.
- All poultry entries must meet all health requirements, including annual pullorum testing.
- All entries must be in good condition (well-feathered, feet in good condition, nails trimmed, with well-formed combs and wattles).
- Each regular 4-H member is entitled to enter as many poultry as space allows, provided all health requirements are met.

Rabbits and Cavies

- Minimum age for rabbit project entries is three months of age.
- Rabbits must be cleaned and brushed for exhibit.
- The feet of rabbits must be in good condition.
- Each regular 4-H member is entitled to enter as many rabbits as space allows, provided all health requirements are met.

ALL PROJECT ANIMALS PURCHASED OUT OF STATE REQUIRE A HEALTH CERTIFICATE WHEN ENTERING NEW JERSEY!

Animal Health Requirements

Each year the New Jersey Department of Agriculture establishes health requirements for all shows and fairs. These requirements, distributed to all 4-H leaders and members annually by the 4-H Office, must be met for entry in all 4-H livestock activities. 4-H staff and the 4-H Livestock Committee is responsible for ensuring that all animals to be exhibited enter the grounds in good health with the appropriate documentation.

The following precautions will be taken to ensure the safety of our animals, inspection staff and visitors:

- 4-H staff and/or designated 4-H club leaders will assess the condition of all 4-H small project animals and issue animal health certificates, including poultry, waterfowl, rabbits and cavies.

- The CMC 4-H Livestock Committee recommends but does not require the vaccination of project rabbits for Rabbit Hemorrhagic Fever. Every attempt will be made to provide a vaccination clinic with an accredited veterinarian for 4-H rabbit project members.

- All animals will receive a health check either by a veterinarian or appointed volunteer before entering the Coover Pavilion. Proper health forms must be completed and signed.

- Pullorum testing is offered free of charge by appointment to Cape May County 4-H poultry project volunteers. This service is based on certified pullorum tester volunteers doing on-farm testing. Please note that certified pullorum testers are not permitted to test turkeys. An NJ State Department of Agriculture technician must test turkeys. Members will be responsible for contacting state technicians for appointments. A fee schedule from the state will indicate the current fees for testing by state technicians and labs. Payment for the testing and lab fees will be the responsibility of the member. If members do not make appointments with volunteer testers for pullorum testing, it is the responsibility of the member to secure proper health certificates and health inspection at their own expense. All poultry must be tested and found negative before coming to the 4-H Fair.

- All animals are expected to arrive at designated times.

Barn Responsibilities / Proper Animal Husbandry

Every 4-H livestock member, along with parent(s) or responsible adult guardian(s), must help with set-up, maintenance, clean-up and take-down in the Coover Pavilion. Youth members, under the supervision of a club leader, will be responsible for feeding animals and cleaning as per the posted schedule. Animals must always have constant supplies of fresh, clean water. Working together, youth and adults will assure that all animals are taken care of, but it is mainly up to each animal project owner, **YOU**, to care for your project animal and keep your pen area clean. There shall be no removal of shavings until the fair is over.

As a 4-H member you have selected a livestock project because you like working with animals. If your animal is not well cared for, your project will not be a success. Good animal care must be practiced at all times and is especially important in displaying your animal at the 4-H fair. Here are some important guidelines:

- There will be at least one adult supervisor and one youth assigned to duty in the Coover Pavilion at all times the fair is open to the public to maintain safety and answer questions.
- Prepare the animals for the show by proper training, fitting and grooming. Keep the needs of the animals a number one priority.
- Provide safe, clean transportation for the animals. It is the 4-H member's responsibility to load and unload his or her own animal. If assistance is needed, older 4-H members or 4-H alumni will be asked to assist. Human and animal safety and humane treatment must be observed at all times to minimize animal stress.
- Under no circumstances shall anyone other than the project animal's owner or club leader take any action toward the animal other than providing water unless asked to do so by the owner or club leader. Examples include but are not limited to feeding animals, hosing down animals, using animals for display purposes, etc. Any action regarding the welfare of animals is the sole decision of the owner or club leader.
- Tie or house animals with enough space to prevent crowding, fighting, or strangulation.
- Pens must be kept clean with fresh bedding. Soiled bedding must be removed daily.
- Fresh, clean water must be available to animals at all times and adequate feed provided. Please refer to the posted feeding schedule.
- During the fair, there is a lot of traffic through the livestock pavilion. We are all in it together – let's be mindful of the conditions in this area and work together to keep it clean and safe.

PRE-FAIR LIVESTOCK BARN SCHEDULE

Please check the *"4-H Livestock Program Guidelines"* before entering this area.

Cage Set Up/Pen Tagging:

A work night will be scheduled for cage/pen cleaning and set up on the Friday evening before the fair. At that time cages/pens will be assigned and tagged. Cages will be assigned on a one-per-exhibitor basis by project area. Extras will be assigned in the same manner. If there are not enough cages available, 4-H members will be responsible for bringing their own cage. All cage assignments are made prior to the 4-H Fair.

When you bring your animals to the fair, livestock shall NOT be put into the pens/cages until all documentation is checked by designated volunteers with expertise in the following areas: goats & rabbits, hogs & lambs, sheep breeding stock, poultry and cattle.

Under no circumstances are tags to be moved from assigned cages.

Tuesday Evening – 6:00 to 9:00 PM	**Wednesday Evening – 6:00 to 9:00 PM**
Large Animal Weigh-In and Entries: Market Hogs and Lambs, Sheep, Goats, Cattle.	Small Animal Entries: Poultry, Rabbits, Cavies, Eggs, etc.

All small and large livestock projects will be checked in and assigned pens/cages by designated livestock representatives only. Animals are expected to stay on premises for the duration of the fair. Any exceptions will be made at the discretion of 4-H staff.

Note: 4-H Members entering large animals on Tuesday have the option to also enter their small animals at that time.

4-H Livestock Market Auction

Any regular 4-H livestock program member (grades 4-13) or livestock club meeting necessary requirements may enter 4-H project animals in the CMC 4-H Livestock Market Auction. Only registered 4-H hogs, sheep and beef will be sold at the auction.

4-H project animals for auction must be officially inspected and weighed at check in. They must also meet health requirements, as well as birth and purchase dates. Parents of 4-H members should not be involved in their child's project weigh-in. 4-H members have the option of unloading their own animals with the help of approved 4-H volunteers.

NO Additional Animals for Sale

ONLY those animals designated for sale at the auction may be sold during the fair. ***No other animal of any kind may be sold or given away until after the fair!*** If needed, a bulletin board may be established where advertisements and photos of animals for sale may be posted.

Weight Rules

Weight requirements for 4-H fair market animals are as follows:

HOGS: Minimum Weight – 170 lbs. Maximum Weight – 325 lbs.

LAMBS: Minimum Weight – 80 lbs. Maximum Weight – 150 lbs.

- All animals must be "show ready" at weigh-in (clean, dry and shorn, if required).
- Animals that do not make minimum weight are **not** eligible for auction.
- Animals that do not make weight may be eligible for exhibition in open classes only at the discretion of 4-H staff and the Rules and Interpretations Committee, composed of a leader or proxy from each club.
- Animals that exceed the maximum weight are still eligible for the auction, however, the buyer only pays for the price per pound to the maximum weight limit.
- 4-H staff will handle any discrepancies that arise at weigh-in in conjunction with the Rules and Interpretations Committee.

Sellers' Responsibilities

- A handling fee for hogs and lambs sold in the auction will be deducted from the sale price before checks are issued. Funds from this fee cover the costs of the auction, the shipping and the handling of the meat, feed and shavings.
- 4-H members selling hogs and lambs must be available to assist with the packaged meat pick up in August.

Payment for Auction Animals

1. Buyers receive an invoice at the auction. Buyers are encouraged to pay all invoices in full that night. Any unpaid bills must be paid before picking up the meat.
2. If a buyer has not paid his/her bill, the CMC 4-H Foundation, Inc. will pay for the animal, so that the child may be paid. Foundation will pursue payment from the buyer.
3. All 4-H members are to receive auction payment no later than the September Livestock Program Committee Meeting.
4. Any buyer who does not pay for their animal by September 1st may not be permitted to purchase an animal in following livestock sales.

Hauling of Market Animals

The 4-H office contracts a livestock hauler to transport market animals sold at the 4-H auction to Bringhurst Meats for processing. This transport is for the sole purpose of 4-H animals sold at auction. No other animals may be added to the transport without permission from 4-H staff. There will be no stops on the way from the fairgrounds to Bringhurst Meats. These rules are put in place to safeguard the well-being of 4-H market animals.

Obtaining Buyers

If you are planning to sell an animal in the livestock auction, then YOU are responsible for securing buyers for your animal(s) as early as possible. Failure to take care of this responsibility will result in a poorly attended auction with low sale prices. It is a proven fact that buyers purchase animals from the youth who have sent them invitation letters!

When selecting a potential buyer, think about why people would buy an animal for meat. (i.e. donation, personal use, for freezer, etc.) Businesses, utility companies, etc. make donations and may be interested in buying your animal and donating it to a worthy cause.

Select several potential buyers to contact and write to each of them. Be sure to personalize your letter including some information about you and your 4-H project animal. If you have sold an animal in the past and used the profits in a positive way you might want to include that information. Also, if you are saving for college or some form of higher education, this encourages buyers to get involved.

The 4-H office will provide you with cards that give details on the auction and special parking passes to include with your letter. It's also a good idea to give your buyers a reminder call just before the sale to be sure they are coming. Of course, following the sale, be sure to send a handwritten thank you note. This encourages your buyer to participate again in the future.

Look for your buyers on the night of the auction. Make it a point to introduce yourself and thank them for coming. After the auction, make sure you thank your buyer in person.

Sample Buyer Letter

(DATE OF YOUR LETTER)

Dear (BUYER'S NAME),

My name is _____. I am _____ years old and a member of the (NAME OF YOUR 4-H CLUB). For my 4-H project this year, I have raised and cared for a (YOUR PROJECT).

On Thursday, (AUCTION DATE), *during the Cape May County 4-H Fair, my animal will be for sale in the 4-H Livestock Auction. I am writing to ask you to come and bid on my animal. Here's why buying my market animal is a good idea.* (CONVINCE YOUR BUYER!)

Thank you. Hope to see you at the Fair!

Sincerely,
(YOUR SIGNATURE)

Annual 4-H Horse & Livestock Showmanship Round Robin
Saturday of Fair @ 3:00pm (time subject to change)

This competition features the top showmanship class winners in each project animal category represented at the fair: horse, hog, goat, sheep, bird/poultry, and rabbit/cavy. Livestock members who win Grand Champion Showmanship in more than one species must select the FIRST animal with which they win a Grand Championship.

All contestants enter the designated Round Robin area at the same time. Each Round Robin contestant will show five of the six species, not to include the species with which he or she earned the grand championship. Contestants will rotate around until they are back at their original animal. They may be asked questions by the judge and are judged on their ability to show each animal to its best advantage in a manner correct for that species.

Contestants should get pointers on showing unfamiliar animals from other 4-H members. All contestants must dress appropriately for livestock showmanship, including white shirt and green bolo/ribbon. Dairy animals to be shown in white. Must wear an exhibitor number.

4-H Fair Livestock Fun Events

- ***Parent/Leader/Alumni Fun Classes***
  Don't miss the fun as 4-H youth members' moms, dads, club leaders and 4-H old timers compete against one another in showmanship classes!

- ***Cutest Barn Animal Contest***
  Cast your vote for the most adorable animal project in the Coover Pavilion. Proceeds benefit the 4-H Livestock Committee.

- ***4-H Livestock Costume Contest***
  Register your project for the annual costume contest! Categories include Funniest, 4-H Spirit, TV or Movie Character.

2026 CMC 4-H Fair Livestock Awards

Grand Champion Beef
Grand Champion Beef Showmanship
Grand Champion and Reserve Champion Hog
Grand Champion and Reserve Champion Hog Showmanship
Grand Champion and Reserve Champion Lamb
Grand Champion and Reserve Champion Lamb Showmanship
Grand Champion and Reserve Champion Goat
Grand Champion and Reserve Champion Goat Showmanship
Grand Champion and Reserve Champion Rabbit
Grand Champion and Reserve Champion Rabbit Showmanship
Grand Champion and Reserve Champion Cavy
Grand Champion and Reserve Champion Cavy Showmanship
Best Rabbit Fur
Grand Champion and Reserve Champion Poultry
Grand Champion and Reserve Champion Poultry Showmanship
Grand Champion and Reserve Champion Waterfowl
Best Egg

New Jersey 4-H Code of Conduct

The primary purpose of the New Jersey 4-H Code of Conduct is to ensure the safety and well-being of all participants at 4-H sponsored events and activities. It applies to all participants, with participants defined as 4-H members, their parents/guardians, and volunteers.
As a participant in the 4-H program, I will:

• Conduct myself in a courteous manner and treat members, parents, 4-H volunteers, Extension staff, judges and others with respect. Appropriate language and behavior are expected at all times.

• Respect and adhere to the rules and guidelines of the 4-H program including all those specific to a 4-H event or activity.

• Uphold an individual's right to dignity by supporting an environment of inclusion which welcomes involvement of participants from all backgrounds.

• Accept supervision and support from county and state 4-H staff while participating in the 4-H program. This includes acceptance of supervision and support from appointed 4-H volunteers coordinating 4-H events and activities.

• Obey local, state and federal laws.

Participants who fail to adhere to the New Jersey 4-H Code of Conduct are subject to a range of disciplinary actions. Such actions will be taken in compliance with the New Jersey 4-H Discipline Policy and Procedure. When appropriate, immediate corrective action will be taken at the 4-H event to ensure the safety and welfare of all participants.

I understand if I fail to adhere to the above Code of Conduct, I will be subject to disciplinary action and potentially prohibited from attending and participating in the New Jersey 4-H Youth Development program.
Policy Adopted: January 2013

The Cape May County 4-H Youth Development Program
is a joint partnership of the Cape May County
Board of County Commissioners
and Rutgers Cooperative Extension.

Cooperating Agencies: Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and Boards of County Commissioners. Rutgers Cooperative Extension, a unit of the Rutgers New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station, is an equal opportunity program provider and employer.

2026 4-H Fair Livestock Coover Pavilion Schedule

TUESDAY, JULY 14

6:00 - 9:00 PM	**Large Animal Entries** (Market Hogs & Lambs, Sheep, Goats) Weigh-in for Lambs and Hogs. All large animals entered and caged.
11:00 PM	Curfew/Lights Out: *All members in campers.*

WEDNESDAY, JULY 15

7:00 AM	Feeding and Clean-up
4:30 PM	Feeding and Clean-Up
4:30-6:00 PM	**Small Animal Entries** (Poultry, Rabbits, Eggs, etc.)
6:00 PM	**Showmanship & Market Judging: <u>Lambs, Breeding Stock Sheep, Hogs</u>**
8:00 PM	Barn Meeting (or immediately following large animal classes)
11:00 PM	Curfew/Lights Out: *All members in campers.*

THURSDAY, JULY 16

7:00 AM	Feeding and Clean-up
9:00 AM	**Breeds Show & Showmanship: <u>Rabbits & Cavies</u>**
12 Noon	Cutest Barn Animal Contest Starts (ongoing)
1:00 PM	Open classes for Rabbit, Cavy and Poultry
4:00 PM	Opening Parade; Feeding and Clean-up
6:00 PM	**Meeting: Sale Participants**
6:30 PM	**Market Auction: Hog & Lamb Sale**
11:00 PM	Curfew/Lights Out: *All members in campers.*

FRIDAY, JULY 17

7:00 AM	Feeding and Clean-up
9:00 AM	**Showmanship: <u>Poultry</u>**
10:00 AM	**Breeds Show: <u>Poultry</u>**
10:00 AM	**Open Classes: <u>Hogs & Lambs</u>**
11:30 AM	**Breeds Show: <u>Waterfowl</u>**
4:30 PM	Feeding and Clean-Up
11:00 PM	Curfew/Lights Out: *All members in campers.*

SATURDAY, JULY 18

7:00 AM	Feeding and Clean-up
10:00 AM	**Goat Show**
12 Noon	**Livestock Costume Contest & Adult Fun Classes**
3:00 PM	**Horse & Livestock Round Robin (Time subject to change)**
4:30 PM	Feeding and Clean-up
10:00 PM	**Small animals may be removed from fairgrounds after a mandatory check of cage area by designated livestock representative.**

SATURDAY & SUNDAY
<u>CLEAN UP</u>

1. **Cages cleaned & put away.**
2. **Show ring emptied.**
3. **Coover Pavilion swept and power washed.**
4. **All trash in livestock & camping area picked up.**

<u>Everyone</u> is responsible for cleaning up following the fair. You may do this with your club or individually, but ALL must help!