

2026 Kansas 4-H Livestock Judging Rules

ELIGIBILITY

1. **Team Entries** – Each County Extension Unit may enter ONE (1) TEAM of three (3) or four (4) enrolled 4-H members. Each District Extension Unit may enter teams of three (3) or four (4) enrolled 4-H members equal to the number of counties comprising the extension district (Kansas 4-H Policy 13.5.2). The three (3) contestants with the highest scores will make up the team total for each species and overall scores. The contestant with the lowest score is still eligible for individual awards.
2. **Entry Deadline** – The deadline to enter is August 1, which is the deadline for all contests included in the Kansas 4-H Livestock Sweepstakes weekend. Youth must be entered through their extension unit. Refer to the Livestock Sweepstakes Guidelines and rules for entry details and instructions.
3. **Entry Fee** – The registration fee for the Kansas 4-H state livestock judging contest is \$20/contestant. Extension Units will be invoiced for youth registered under their county or extension district.
4. **Contest Location & Date** – The Kansas 4-H State Livestock Judging Contest will tentatively be hosted in the Bilbrey Family Event Center in Manhattan, KS, on Saturday, August 22.
5. **Individual Contestants** – No alternates will be listed on a team. Up to five (5) youth from each county, who are not already listed as a member of a livestock judging team, are allowed to compete as individuals in the livestock judging contest. *Therefore, a county may enter up to nine (9) total youth (one team of 4, plus 5 individuals) in the state 4-H livestock judging contest.*
6. **Member Eligibility** – Members must be 9, but not yet 19, before January 1 of the current year. Contestants in National 4-H Competitive Events cannot have reached their 19th birthday as of January 1 of the current year. **If a team has one or more members who are under 14 years of age, that team will be ineligible to qualify for any national competition.** *The contest is designed with the competitive intensity of a state-level event to give youth the opportunity to display their advanced skills in critical thinking, decision making, reasoning ability, communication skills, and public speaking. Participants should understand the basic concepts of this event for it to be a positive experience that fosters experiential learning.*
7. **Accommodations** – We request that extension staff share information regarding equal opportunity and disability accommodation request information at least 4 weeks prior to the contest with 4-H parents. To request a disability accommodation, complete [the Disabilities Accommodation Request Form](#) four weeks prior to the event. Those requesting accommodations for a local extension program, should work with the extension agent to complete this form. *Please let Lexie know if a coach, volunteer, or 4-H participant has any special (dietary, reading, medical etc.) needs at least two weeks prior to the event. This information needs to be included in the system at the time of registration. (adhayes@ksu.edu)
8. **Returning National Contest Participants** – **Individuals who have judged as an official team member or as an alternate at the designated National 4-H Livestock Judging Contest in Louisville, Kentucky, are not eligible to compete as a team member.** *They may participate as an individual contestant but will not be eligible for awards.* Their score will, however, be counted towards individual sweepstakes awards. If an individual served as an alternate at the National 4-H Contest but did not actually participate in the contest, they retain their eligibility for the state contest.
9. **Post-Secondary Course Work** – In keeping with National 4-H rules, contestants who have participated in **any** post-secondary (university, college, junior college or technical school) course work or training for post-secondary competition in the subject area of this contest are not eligible to compete.

10. **Attire** – participants are encouraged to dress in professional, yet cool, comfortable, and versatile clothing. Youth will be judging classes in the new Bilbrey Family Event Center, but could judge some classes outside and it will most likely be hot and humid. Contestants are encouraged to wear sunscreen and dress accordingly.

METHOD OF CONDUCT

1. Eight to ten (8-10) classes of four (4) head will be judged. They may include beef cattle, swine, meat goats, and sheep. Contest officials reserve the right to select classes and species which will provide the highest quality classes. Oral reasons will be taken on four (4) classes. Classes may include scenarios to assist in placing the class. Breeding class scenarios may include EPD's.
2. Scoring will be on the basis of 50 points per class on placing and 50 points for each set of reasons.
3. Participants are required to furnish their own paper and pencils. Prepared judging aids are not allowed. Contestants will submit their official placings on a scantron sheet, thus participants will need to keep a record of their placings throughout the contest. **Placings submitted on the scantron will be the contestant's official card and it is their responsibility to make sure it is accurate. No corrections will be made during tabulation.** Coaches are encouraged to discuss the scantron with their youth prior to the contest. Example scantrons are posted of the [Livestock Sweepstakes](#) page of the KSU Youth Livestock Program website.
4. Conferring among contestants (talking, gestures, etc.) will result in immediate dismissal from the contest. Contestants may not carry any electronic communication device (cell phones, smart watch, etc.). Any contestant found in possession of such a device at any time during the contest will be immediately removed from competition.
5. Two minutes will be allowed to give oral reasons to the official judges. Use of notes during oral reasons is strongly discouraged and will result in a reduced reasons score.

TIEBREAKERS

1. Ties will be broken based upon the individual with the higher reason score.
2. The secondary tiebreaker will be the lowest combined placing score for the reason classes.
3. If an additional tiebreaker is necessary, contest organizers will identify a class, or group of classes, to be the determining factor.

AWARDS AND OUT-OF-STATE PARTICIPATION

Awards will be announced on Sunday, August 23 at approximately 3:30 p.m., following all sweepstakes events. If you are unable to attend, a county or district may request another extension unit or 4-H member pick up their awards following the ceremony. Awards not claimed during the event will be distributed at the state fair or shipped to the local unit.

Continuing this year, top ranking livestock judging individuals will be invited to practice for the opportunity to represent Kansas 4-H at the National 4-H Livestock Judging Contest (NAILE) in Louisville, KY. Practices will be offered at the Kansas State Fair and through web-based technology with a K-State Department of Animal Sciences & Industry graduate student. Top 4-H competitors from across Kansas who are age 14 before January 1, 2026, judging at the Kansas 4-H State Livestock Judging Contest, may have the opportunity to expand their livestock judging knowledge and skills through this partnership created between Kansas 4-H and the K-State Department of Animal Sciences and Industry. This will also provide a chance for 4-H members to learn more about Kansas State University, Animal Sciences, and Agriculture careers. Top placing teams from local Extension Units will continue to have the ability to travel to other multi-state/national contests, including Aksarben, the American Royal, and the National Western Stock Show.

An All-Star Livestock Judging Team will be selected to represent Kansas at the National 4-H Contest in Louisville, KY. First, second and third place Extension Unit teams (if qualified) will have the option to choose in which contest they prefer to compete. The National Western Livestock Judging Contest in Denver, CO; the American Royal in Kansas City, MO, or Aksarben in Grand Island, NE. Choices of location will be determined by teams in order of their placing. *Example:* First place could choose The American Royal Livestock Judging Contest in Kansas City; the second-place team would be given the opportunity to participate in the National Western Livestock Judging Contest in Denver, CO or Aksarben in Grand Island, NE. The third-place team would be given the option to accept or reject the remaining contest. The funding available for teams attending national contests will be distributed as available and deemed appropriate by the State 4-H Office. Supporters include the Kansas Livestock Association and the Kansas 4-H Foundation. Depending on available funding, teams may be offered an opportunity to compete at a national contest, but at their own expense. Cash awards must be used toward travel expenses to the respective contest immediately following the state contest of that year or they will be forfeited.

Contestants may compete at a specific 4-H contest (Louisville, Denver or Kansas City) one time only. Except for the National Western Contest, teams will receive funding toward the contest of their choice after competing in the contest. The team representing Kansas at the National Western Contest will receive the remainder of their team scholarship after the contest entry fee is paid by the State 4-H Office. Teams winning multiple contests, such as judging and/or skillathon, and/or quiz bowl will receive an adjusted amount of funding for participating in the same national event. The 4-H Livestock Judging Contest at the National Western in Denver, the American Royal in Kansas City, and Aksarben in Grand Island prohibit participation by previous contestants of the National 4-H Livestock Judging Contest in Louisville.