



Maryland 4-H State Livestock Skillathon Contest General Rules

Objectives of Livestock Skillathon

The primary objective of the Maryland 4-H Livestock Skillathon Contest is to provide an opportunity for youth enrolled in 4-H to demonstrate the breadth of their knowledge and understanding of animal science and management in a competitive setting where attitudes of friendliness and fairness prevail. The practical application of the contestants' knowledge and skills is emphasized. The contest's coordinators strive to provide an educational experience for participants and spectators as well as an opportunity for the creation of new friendships.

General

1. Contest date and time: **Saturday, March 7, 2026, Contest Check-in: 9-9:30 a.m. Contest Begins: 10:00 a.m. Awards: 2:00 p.m.** Contest location: **Montgomery County Fairgrounds, 501 Perry Pkwy, Gaithersburg, MD 20877.**
2. This is a contest in which individuals compete. There will be NO team entries. There will be a \$5.00 entry fee for each contestant.
3. There is no limit to the number of individuals that each UME unit may enter in this contest.
4. Only registered 4-H members may participate in the contest. Individuals participating in the statewide contest must be enrolled as a Maryland 4-H member for 2026 in 4-H Online by **February 18, 2026**. All contest participants must be registered for the event in 4-H Online by **February 18, 2026**. 4-H members not registered by the deadline will not be allowed to participate in the contest. Counties will be invoiced for entry fees based on the total number of registered participants from their programs. There are no substitutions permitted.
5. **LUNCH will be on your own.** Contestants will be released for lunch on their own immediately following completion of all stations of their respective age division. **Awards will be presented beginning at approximately 2:00pm.**
6. All youth and adult participants of the 2026 contest must affirm they are well enough to participate in the 4-H activity when signing the attendance form for the 4-H activity. Indoor 4-H activities must comply with local school system directives on mask requirements and physical distancing for indoors.
7. Participants and adults will not be allowed into contest areas prior to the contest start.
8. For the 2026 contest, each age division (Junior, Intermediate, and Senior) will complete its respective contest written exams and stations in separate rooms of the facility.
9. Contestants should bring their own clipboard and pencils. Calculators will be provided.
10. Statewide competition will be governed by the prescribed procedures and regulations. Additional rules may be added for specific purposes. Contestants not complying with the rules will be disqualified. Coaches and/or spectators not complying with the applicable Procedures and Regulations contained in this document and/or announced will be dismissed from the contest area. All challenges to the contest, including stations, officials' decisions and results, must be submitted in writing to the State 4-H Youth Development Specialist, Animal Science within 24 hours of the contest.



Contestants and Eligibility

1. Contestants must be enrolled in the Maryland 4-H program by the contest registration deadline and approved by the 4-H Extension Educator of their respective UME office/unit.
2. Maryland 4-H members must be between the ages of 8 - 18 as of January 1 of the current year. Juniors are ages 8 - 10; Intermediates are ages 11 - 13; and Seniors are ages 14 - 18.
3. Contestants must not have previously competed in the Skillathon contest at the National 4-H Livestock Skillathon (Louisville, Kentucky).
4. Senior contestants shall not have competed previously in any official post-secondary (collegiate) livestock quiz bowl or quadrathlon contest.
5. Attire: Clothing that identifies the contestant's 4-H county/city may **not** be worn.
6. All electronic devices (cell phones, tablets, calculators, smart watches, etc.) are prohibited. Contestants are advised to leave these devices either in their car or with their parents/coaches prior to the start of the contest. If a contestant is discovered to be in possession of an electronic device during the contest, the contestant will be disqualified.
7. Contestants may not talk with others during and between the contest stations and testing components. One (1) warning will be issued. Failure to comply may result in disqualification.
8. Contestants requesting a reasonable accommodation to participate in this event must indicate the need on the contest registration form in 4-H Online by the registration deadline. A reasonable accommodation is a modification or adjustment to a program that will enable a person who has a disability to participate in and/or benefit from the program. A parent/guardian of the contestant requesting an accommodation will be contacted by a contest coordinator to discuss reasonable accommodation requests. Accommodation requests may not be accepted or modified on the day of the contest.
9. Participation in this event requires the 4-H member and his/her parent/guardian to agree to the terms and conditions of the Maryland 4-H Event Liability Release and Informed Consent Agreement. The agreement will be signed electronically during the contestant's event registration in 4-H Online.

Judges

Official judges shall place all of the classes. They will make the official placing, indicate the cuts to be made, and file the official cards with the Contest Superintendents.

Contest Phases

1. Quiz phase of the contest may include questions about the total livestock industry.
 - a. Juniors – 10 questions
 - b. Intermediates and Seniors – 25 questions
2. Quality Assurance Exercise for Juniors, Intermediates and Seniors
3. Stations phase of the contest will consist of a series of stations or tables where contestants will respond to the requirements of the station. Examples of stations which may be used include, but are not limited to:
 - a. Breed Identification
 - b. Equipment Identification
 - c. Retail Meats Identification
 - d. Meats Judging
 - e. Hay Judging with Questions
 - f. Wool Judging with Questions
 - g. Feeds Identification (NOTE: Senior station may include Feeds Questions)
 - h. Parts for Juniors (Beef-2026, Swine-2027, Sheep-2028)

- i. Anatomy for Intermediates/Seniors, includes external parts, skeletal, internal organs, parts of gastrointestinal tract, male/female reproductive organs.
- j. **Seniors ONLY (1 or more from the following): Keep / cull scenario, Breeding / selection scenario, Management / marketing scenario.**

Scoring

1. The maximum score for each station of the contest is 50 points.
2. The maximum score for the quiz and quality assurance exercise is 100 points each.
3. Contestants should pay careful attention to recording responses in the proper columns of the score cards. Answers recorded in the incorrect column will be scored as incorrect.
4. Ties in the overall contest will be broken in the following order:
 - a. Highest score in the Quiz Phase; if still tied then,
 - b. Highest score in the Station Phase; if still tied then,
 - c. Highest score in the Quality Assurance Exercise.
5. Ties within any phase of the contest are to be broken using the overall score first and then the same sequence as above. If further tie breaking is needed, the scores at each station, in order, may be used.
6. Contest score cards/answer cards/judging cards will not be returned to participants following the contest. Contest stations will be available for viewing for a limited time following the contest and official keys will be displayed at each station.

Awards

1. A trophy will be awarded to the highest placing individual in each age division.
2. The top ten (10) individuals in each age division will be awarded ribbons.
3. The top ten (10) highest scoring Senior contestants will be invited to participate in an additional Skillathon Event to qualify for the Maryland 4-H State Skillathon Team that will compete at the National 4-H Skillathon Contest in Louisville, KY in November 2026*. A State Team of four individuals and a list of ranked alternates will be identified from Senior contestants participating in both the State Skillathon and the additional Skillathon Event. There will be additional requirements for those selected for the State Team. For example, participation in additional practices held to prepare for the nationals. Members not meeting these requirements may be substituted with an alternate at the sole discretion of the 4-H Skillathon Team Coaches and the 4-H Youth Development Specialist, Animal Sciences.

The additional Skillathon Event to be used (in conjunction with the State Skillathon Contest) to determine the State Team will be held on Sunday, March 22 at the Maryland 4-H Center, 8020 Greenmead Drive, College Park, MD 20740. Stations will focus on the following:

- a. Breeds: Beef and Swine
- b. Meats: May include Beef, Pork and Lamb
- c. Anatomy: Sheep
- d. Breeding Scenario: Beef
- e. All other stations: May include Beef, Goat, Sheep, and Swine questions

NOTE: 4-H members may represent Maryland 4-H on only ONE State competition team in a calendar year. If a 4-H'er qualifies for more than one State team in the same year, they must choose on which team they will participate. Once a 4-H'er commits to a state competition team, they may not withdraw in order to accept a spot on a different State team.



*NOTE: The selection of a State 4-H Livestock Skillathon Team and the Team's participation in the Regional/National 4-H Livestock Skillathon Contests are contingent upon the event(s) being held and applicable UME travel guidelines.

Livestock Skillathon References

Junior References:

- a. References for all stations: Quiz, Quality Assurance, Breed Identification, Retail Meats Identification, Meats Judging, Hay Judging with Questions, Wool Judging with Questions, Feeds Identification, and Parts for Juniors.
 - The Ohio State University Swine Resource Handbook
 - The Ohio State University Sheep Resource Handbook
 - The Ohio State University Beef Resource Handbook
 - The Ohio State University Goat Resource Handbook
- b. Additional Reference for Retail Meats Identification and Meats Judging
 - American Royal National 4-H Retail Meat Identification Codes - 2017
<https://extension.umd.edu/sites/extension.umd.edu/files/2021-05/4-h-retail-cuts-beginning-2017.pdf>
 - National 4-H Meat Judging: <https://meatscience.org/students/meat-judging-program/national-4-h-meat-judging/identification-and-judging-contest>

Intermediate and Senior References:

Information covered in this contest may be found in one or more of, but not limited to, the following references:

- The Ohio State University Swine Resource Handbook
- The Ohio State University Sheep Resource Handbook
- The Ohio State University Beef Resource Handbook
- The Ohio State University Goat Resource Handbook
- Maryland Small Ruminants website: <http://www.sheepandgoat.com/>
- Oklahoma State Univ. Breeds of Livestock: <http://www.ansi.okstate.edu/breeds/>
- Nasco Farm & Ranch Catalog: <https://www.enasco.com/c/Farm-Ranch>
- University of Maryland Extension publication "Evaluating Hay Quality":
<https://extension.umd.edu/sites/extension.umd.edu/files/2021-04/Evaluating%20Hay%20Fact%20Sheet%20FS644.pdf>
- Oklahoma State University publication "Hay Judging" (F-2588).
<https://extension.okstate.edu/fact-sheets/evaluating-hay-quality-based-on-sight-smell-and-feel-hay-judging.html>
- University of Kentucky publication "Quality Hay Production" (AGR-62).
<https://publications.mgcafe.uky.edu/files/agr62.pdf>
- American Royal National 4-H Retail Meat Identification Codes - 2017
<https://extension.umd.edu/sites/extension.umd.edu/files/2021-05/4-h-retail-cuts-beginning-2017.pdf>
- National 4-H Meat Judging: <https://meatscience.org/students/meat-judging-program/national-4-h-meat-judging/identification-and-judging-contest>
- Pork Checkoff Certification & Tools: <https://www.porkcheckoff.org/certification-tools/>

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:

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