



Maryland 4-H State Dairy Judging Contest Procedures & Regulations

Objectives of the Dairy Judging Contest

The Maryland 4-H State Dairy Judging Contest is held each year during the Maryland State Fair in Timonium, MD.

The primary objective of the State 4-H Dairy Judging contest is to provide an opportunity for youth enrolled in 4-H to demonstrate the breadth of their knowledge and understanding of dairy cattle in a competitive setting where attitudes of friendliness and fairness prevail.

General Rules & Regulations

The following General Rules apply to all 4-H Judging Contests (Division U) held annually at the State Fair:

1. Only 4-H Members may compete in this division. 4-H Members may only compete in one State Fair Judging Contest (Sections I-V) per year.
2. All contestants must comply with “General State Fair Rules & Regulations”, “General 4-H and FFA Rules & Regulations”, these “Division Rules & Regulations” and the applicable “Section Rules & Regulations”. Please note that these are only general rules, please refer to the State 4-H Judging Contest Guidelines & Procedures (available from the 4-H office) for additional information.
3. Contestants will participate according to their 4-H Age (as of 1/1/26): Junior (ages 8-10); Intermediate (ages 11-13), Senior (ages 14-18) - unless noted.
4. Entries will be made by the 4-H member in 4-HOnline at <https://v2.4honline.com> by July 31st and verified by the 4-H Extension Educator. **Counties/City may enter one (1) Team (consisting of 4 members) and an unlimited number of Individuals in each age division.** All will participate in the contest.
 - a. Verification that each 4-H Member has participated in a 4-H educational program will be made by the 4-H Extension Educator.
 - b. Selection/verification of contestants will be at the discretion of the 4-H Extension Educator.
 - c. Substitutions/Alternates: Alternates are not allowed. If a Team Member is not present on day of contest, one pre-registered Individual may be substituted.
 - d. Team Members must be enrolled in 4-H in the same county/Baltimore City, exceptions are those 4-H Members that belong to a project club that crosses county/city lines (i.e., a tri-county livestock club). 4-H Members enrolled in such clubs may compete jointly as a team in that project area. The 4-H Extension Educator representing the Joint Team entry must notify the State 4-H Office by July 31.
 - e. Restrictions relating to college/vocational training for these contests are listed in the department.



- f. There is a \$5.00 fee per participant for all judging contests. An additional \$10.00 lunch fee will be collected per participant in the Dairy & Livestock Judging contests.
5. A 4-H member who has represented Maryland on a team in a National 4-H Contest is ineligible for the State 4-H Contest in the same contest area. A 4-H member may not represent Maryland 4-H at an out-of-state competition as a member of more than one team in a given year.
6. Contestants will not be allowed to take books, notes or writing paper into the contest except cards as provided by the superintendent. Cell phones and other portable electronic devices are not allowed. While the contest is in progress there shall be no communication between the contestants or between a contestant and anyone else, except as directed by the superintendent or their representative. Contestants will be under the direct supervision of the group leader at all times.
7. Scoring: Unless otherwise noted, the top three scores of designated team members will determine the team score in the respective age divisions. All ties will be broken by the Superintendent using prescribed procedures.
8. Awards: Unless otherwise noted, all contestants (both team members and individuals) are eligible for individual awards. Ribbons and premiums will be awarded to the 20 High Individuals in each age division for each contest. Premiums: 1st (\$20), 2nd–10th (\$15), 11th–20th (\$5). Awards will be presented to the Team members in each age division for each contest as well as special awards (see each individual section).
9. **All contests (except for the Dairy Goat Judging and Skills Event) will be held on Saturday, September 5, 2026.**
10. 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 Manager to discuss reasonable accommodation requests. Accommodation requests cannot be accepted or modified on the day of the contest.
11. 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.

Additional Contest Eligibility and Registration Information

1. Participants in 4-H activities at the Maryland State Fair must be enrolled as a 4-H member in Maryland and their enrollment recorded in 4-H Online by **July 1** of the current year. 4-H members must have passed their 8th birthday and must not have reached their 19th birthday on January 1 of the current year.
2. 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 **July 1, 2026**. All contest participants must be registered for the event in 4-H Online by **July 31, 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.
3. To be eligible to represent the Maryland 4-H at Regional or National 4-H events, a 4-H member must have passed their 14th birthday by January 1 of the current year.

Dairy Judging Section Rules

1. There is a \$5.00 participant fee and a separate \$10.00 lunch fee required for this event.
2. Contest Date and Time: **Saturday, September 5, 2026, Contest Check-In: 8:00 a.m., Contest Begins: 8:30 a.m. Awards Ceremony: 6:00 p.m.** Contest Location: **Maryland State Fair Cow Palace Main Show Ring, 2200 York Road, Timonium, MD 21093**
3. This contest shall consist of placing 10 classes of cows and heifers selected from Ayrshire, Brown Swiss, Guernsey, Jersey, Red & White, and Holstein breeds.
4. Contestants will have a total of 12 minutes to place each of the five heifer classes and non-reason cow classes. Placing cards will be collected after the total allocated time for each class has expired. Ring Procedure Placings will be as follows (activity/minutes): Circle the ring clockwise (2 minutes), Head to Tail (3 minutes), Circle the ring counterclockwise (2 minutes), Side by Side (3 minutes), Head to Tail (2 minutes).
5. Juniors will be required to give 1 set of Oral Reasons on the cow classes, Intermediates will be required to give 2 sets and seniors will be required to give 4 sets.
6. Oral Reasons will be given on identified classes of cows. A total of 20 minutes will be available for oral reason classes (activity/minutes): Head to Tail (1 minute), Circle the ring clockwise (2 minutes), Side by Side (2 minutes), Head to Tail (2 minutes).
7. A designated number of High Senior Individuals, who are available for further training on Sunday, September 6th, will make up the group from which four (4) may be selected to represent Maryland 4-H at the World Dairy Expo and four (4) may be selected to represent Maryland 4-H at the North American International Livestock Exposition (NAILE) Dr. George Heersche Jr. Invitational Dairy Judging Contest. NOTE: Individuals selected to represent Maryland 4-H at the Dr. George Heersche Jr. Invitational Dairy Judging Contest cannot participate in the National FFA Dairy Cattle Career Development Event in the same calendar year.
8. A 4-H member who is participating in or has completed post-secondary course work in Dairy Cattle Judging or Dairy Cattle Evaluation is not eligible. A 4-H member who has participated in a post-secondary Dairy Cattle Judging Contest is not eligible.

Judges

1. Official judges shall place the classes while the contestants are judging, make the official placing, indicate the cuts to be made, and file the official card with the contest organizers.
2. When the contestant has concluded presentation of their oral reasons and answered any questions, the judge will write their reason score on the contestants' placing card and turn it in for tabulation.
3. Official judges' placings are final.

Contest Procedures

1. Team coaches shall check-in their teams and individuals at 8:00 a.m.
2. Contestants will be assigned to a contest Group by contest organizers. Each Group will have a designated Group Leader. Contestants will remain with their Group for the duration of the contest, including class rotations, lunch, and presentation of oral reasons.
3. Upon completion of the contest, contestants will be released to their parents or coaches.

Awards

1. Awards will be presented at the 6pm 4-H Judging Awards Program on Saturday, September 5, 2026 in the Cow Palace. Dairy Judging and Livestock Judging results will

be presented during this Awards Program. The order of award presentations will alternate between the two contests each year.

2. Ribbons and premiums will be awarded to the 20 High Individuals in each age division. Awards will be presented to the Team members in each age division. Special Awards may be awarded to high individuals in specific contest divisions in specific age divisions.
3. Maryland 4-H State Dairy Judging Team(s) Selection Process:
 - a. A designated number of High Senior Individuals will be announced during the Awards Program as being eligible to participate in further training/try-out session on **Sunday, September 6th**, from which four (4) may be selected to represent Maryland 4-H at the World Dairy Expo and four (4) may be selected to represent Maryland 4-H at the North American International Livestock Exposition (NAILE).
 - b. Logistics and additional details about the training/try-out session will be shared by the State Coach(es) immediately following the Awards Program.
 - c. The selection of a Maryland 4-H State Dairy Judging Team(s) and the Team(s)' participation in out-of-state regional and national contests are contingent upon having sufficient youth interest, the events being held, and applicable UME travel guidelines.

Statewide 4-H Dairy Judging Practices

Contest coordinators typically coordinate a series of statewide dairy judging practice sessions to be offered each summer (typically held between late June through early August) to help members prepare for the State 4-H Dairy Judging Contest. The practices are made possible with the gracious support of participating Maryland dairy farms/producers which host session venues and/or provide live animal classes. 4-H members and coaches from all counties/city will be invited to participate. The practice schedule and session locations are shared with counties once finalized in early summer.

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:

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