



Maryland 4-H State Poultry Judging Contest Rules

Objectives of the 4-H Poultry Judging Contest

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

The primary objective of the Maryland 4-H Poultry Judging Contest is to provide an opportunity for youth enrolled in 4-H to demonstrate the breadth of their knowledge and understanding of poultry science and management in a competitive setting where attitudes of friendliness and fairness prevail.

The Maryland 4-H Poultry Judging Contest offers 1) judging classes in which contestants place four (4) animals in order of characteristic desirability in accordance with breed or class standards, and 2) age-appropriate quizzes and identification stations that are designed to test youth knowledge of poultry and the poultry industry. The practical application of the contestants' knowledge and skills is also emphasized.

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, 2026.



- 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.

Poultry Judging Section Rules



1. There is a \$5.00 participant fee required for this event; there is no lunch fee as the contest will typically be finished by lunchtime.
2. **The contest will begin at 9:00am on Saturday, September 5, 2026 in the Horse Sales Pavilion, Maryland State Fairgrounds, Timonium, MD.**
3. The following areas will be included in the contest:
 - Past Egg Production Evaluation (3 classes) (EVALUATION CHANGES effective 2022)
 - Past Egg Production Oral Reasons (2 classes)
 - Market Poultry: Grading ready-to-cook carcasses (GRADING CHANGES effective 2022)
 - Market Poultry: Grading ready-to-cook parts (NEW effective 2022)
 - Market Poultry: Parts identification (NEW PARTS ADDED effective 2022)
 - Market Poultry: Further processed products evaluation (NEW effective 2022)
 - Market Eggs: Exterior egg quality (ALL EGG COLORS NOW POSSIBLE effective 2022)
 - Market Eggs: Interior egg quality - Candling
 - Market Eggs: Interior egg quality - Broken Out
4. The Junior Contest will be a modified version of the Intermediate and Senior Contest. Oral Reasons for one class of production birds will be a part of the individual's total score. The Intermediate and Senior Contests will include all the areas listed above for the contest.
5. NOTE: The *National 4-H Poultry Judging Manual* previously sold by the University of Nebraska is no longer applicable to the State and National 4-H Poultry Judging Contests. The NEW *National 4-H Poultry Judging Contest Manual* is only available online at <https://national4hpoultry.ca.uky.edu/poultry-judging-manual> (Most recent revision 2/24/2021).
6. The four (4) High Senior Individuals may be eligible to represent Maryland 4-H at the national contest. Additional training in preparation for participation in the national contest will be provided. All team members are required to attend practices and a trip orientation.

Awards Program

1. Awards will be presented at the 4:00pm 4-H Judging Awards Program on Saturday, September 5, 2026 in the Cow Palace. Horticulture Judging, Poultry Judging, and Rabbit Judging and Skillathon Contest results will be presented during this Awards Program. The order of award presentations will rotate among the different 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 Poultry Judging Team Selection Process:
 - a. The four (4) High Senior Individuals may be eligible to represent Maryland 4-H at the National 4-H Poultry and Egg Conference in Louisville, KY in November. Additional training in preparation for participation in the national contest will be provided. All team members are required to attend practices and a trip orientation.
 - b. Logistics and additional details about the team training sessions will be shared by the State Coach(es) immediately following the Awards Program.
 - c. The selection of a Maryland 4-H State Poultry Judging Team and the Team's participation in the out-of-state national contest is contingent upon having sufficient youth interest, the events being held, and applicable UME travel guidelines.

Contest Resources

The information covered in this contest may be found in, but not limited to, the following references:

- The (NEW) *National 4-H Poultry Judging Contest Manual* is only available online at <https://national4hpoultry.ca.uky.edu/poultry-judging-manual> (Most recent revision 2/24/2021). The manual may be downloaded at no cost.

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:

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