

2026 FEEDER CALF PROJECT

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Species Chair:

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IMPORTANT DATES		IMPORTANT INFO	
Registration	March 1, 2026	Maximum Weight @ Fair	700 lbs.
Birth Date	On/After December 1, 2025	Minimum Weight @ Fair	300 lbs.
Possession Date	June 1	Record Book Required for Market Youth ONLY	Saturday of Fair Week
Tagging	TBD	Thank You Note Required for Market Youth ONLY	Saturday of Fair Week

Participating 4-H youth must abide by all general rules and regulations listed in the Manistee County 4-H Livestock Council's Policies & Procedures books. This includes, but is not limited to, the Code of Conducts, registration deadlines, showmanship and market requirements, record book and thank you letter requirements, etc.

Registration Requirements

- ❖ All Feeder Calves participants (Market & Show Only) MUST complete the registration (online or paper) via the Manistee County 4-H Livestock Council NO LATER than March 1, 2026.
- ❖ Members are allowed to register and tag two (2) beef feeders OR two (2) dairy feeders OR one (1) beef and one (1) dairy feeder, but the calf intended for market MUST be identified before either calf is weighed at check-in.
- ❖ To participate in the 4-H Livestock shows and auction at the fair, youth must follow all registration requirements set forth by the Manistee 4-H Livestock Council.
- ❖ To participate in the 4-H Livestock Auction at the fair, youth must register and compete in the appropriate showmanship AND market classes.

Animal Requirements

- ❖ All cattle MUST have an official radio frequency identification (RFID) electronic tag in their ear before they leave the farm on which they were born.
- ❖ Beef and/or Dairy Feeder Calves must be born on or after December 1, 2025.
- ❖ Feeders must be registered by March 1 and in possession by June 1.
- ❖ Heifers, steers, or bulls will be allowed, and all must be dehorned.
- ❖ Heifers that will be over four (4) months of age at Fair Weigh-In must have brucellosis (reproductive disease/bacterial infection) vaccine.
- ❖ Dairy feeders may be purebreds or crosses of Dairy breeds only. Beef breeds/beef crosses will be shown in Beef Divisions.
- ❖ Minimum weight at Fair Weigh-In will be 300 lbs. and the maximum weight will be 700 lbs.
- ❖ Feeders exceeding 700 lbs. will be sold at 700 lbs. and will not be eligible for the Grand or Reserve Grand Champion Award.

Cloverbuds

- ❖ 4-H members who are 5-7 years of age (as of January 1st of the current year)
- ❖ Cloverbuds have their own showmanship class. It will be held on the same day as the other cattle showmanship classes, and they will go last.
- ❖ Cloverbuds may bring their own calf to the fair OR they may choose to show someone else's calf
- ❖ Cloverbuds are not allowed to market their calves or enter breed classes.
- ❖ A parent, leader, or other adult must always be present when the Cloverbud is working with their calf, including in the show ring.

Cloverbuds are encouraged to complete and turn in the Cloverbud 4-H Record Book for their project for knowledge and experience.

Fair Week Requirements

1. General Requirements

- Weigh-in takes place on the Monday of Fair Week
- Youth must be present or must have made prior arrangements with the species chair for someone else to weigh their animal.
- Protective boots or leather shoes are always required when working with your calf.
- Youth are responsible for keeping their pens clean all week.

2. Animal Care Requirements

- Youth are responsible for providing enough grain and hay to care for their calf throughout the entire week
- Youth are responsible for feeding, watering, cleaning, and caring for their animals the entire week.
- **Animals shall be treated humanely at all times. Any reports of unethical, inhumane, and/or abusive treatment or actions that cause distress and/or suffering to an animal will be evaluated immediately by a group consisting of at least one (1) 4-H Staff person and at least three (3) Livestock Council Members, with the possible inclusion of a Fair Board member, depending on the circumstances, and may lead to disqualification and removal from all 4-H and Open Livestock Shows held at the Fair.**

3. Show Day Policies

- All members intending to sell an animal must also show that animal.
- To participate in any 4-H Market Class, a member must have first completed a year of 4-H "Showmanship Only" – that is, showing any species without selling it. Once that initial requirement is fulfilled, the member may market in any other year in their 4-H career. Any year of participation in official Cloverbud Showmanship events also counts towards this requirement.
- All show apparel must be clean, properly fitted and free of design and advertisements. Clothing with Club names or personal names cannot be worn while showing.

- **Show Attire:** Members participating **with a beef feeder must** wear black or dark denim jeans, and a button-down, long-sleeved shirt. A tie or vest can be added. Solid boots are to be worn. Calves must be shown with a leather show halter with a chain lead, a show stick, and a comb.
- **Show Attire:** Members participating **with a dairy feeder must** wear a white shirt (long-sleeved) with white pants or white jeans. Solid boots are to be worn. Calves must be shown with a leather show halter with a chain lead, a show stick, and a comb.

4. Fair End Responsibilities

- Completely clean and scrape down pens.
- Bars and pen dividers need to be scrubbed and wiped down.

After Fair Requirements

- ❖ All market Feeder Calf participants (Beef & Dairy) must turn in a completed 4-H record **book by the Saturday of Fair Week**. Electronic copies of a record book **will not** be accepted.
- ❖ A Thank You and 8x10 Auction photo must be given to your buyer. **Physical or photographic evidence of a Thank You Note having been sent to your buyer must be provided to the Livestock Council by the Saturday of Fair Week.**
- ❖ Notes that are physically submitted must be properly and correctly addressed to the appropriate buyer and bear sufficient postage. ENVELOPES MUST REMAIN UNSEALED and turned into the secure box on the Fairgrounds.
- ❖ Failure to submit a record book and/or thank you note will result in the members' participation status for the following Fair year to be suspended. If a record book and/or thank you note is not received by the November Livestock Council Meeting, the 4-H member will forfeit their participation in 4-H Livestock Show & Market for the following Fair year.

Important Information & Tips for a Successful Feeder Calf Project

- Cost
Animal: \$750 - \$1500 (fluctuates with the current market prices for beef)
Feed: \$500
- Housing - Calves must:
 - ✓ Be kept out of drafts
 - ✓ Be sheltered from weather
 - ✓ Have room to move
 - ✓ Have proper bedding (straw, wood shavings, or sand)
- Nutrition
 - ✓ Fresh water at all times. Ensure that it does not freeze throughout the winter.
 - ✓ Be sure to keep grain, hay, and water fresh and clean of feces
 - ✓ Increase the amount of feed as the calf grows. Consult your nutritionist, junior beef species chair, or feed supplier for advice.
 - ✓ Start the junior beef calf out slowly on grain to keep it from getting a digestive upset.
 - a. First 2-3 days: Feed hay only

- b. Next 3 days: Feed ½ pound of grain twice a day along with hay
- c. Day 7-10: Feed 1 pound of grain twice a day
- d. After Day 10 do the math!
 - Weight of Calf x 2.5% = Pounds of grain for the day
 - Keep refiguring your calculations as the calf grows so you are feeding the correct amount

- ✓ Average daily gain should be about 2 pounds.
- ✓ Calf should be fed at the same times every day
- ✓ Different Feeds:
 - a. Energy – a mixture of cracked or rolled corn, oats, protein pellets, and vitamins - Calves should not be given whole corn as they cannot process it well
 - b. Protein- Calves should be fed 16-18% protein.
 - c. Roughage – hay, silage
 - d. Supplements – soybean meal, processed supplements from feed mill/store

▪ Health

- ✓ Observe daily: Note any difference in behavior (not eating, not getting up, sluggish, ears down, etc.) or any difference in appearance (bloating, runny nose, mucus Large Beef 3 eyes, etc.). Changes in behavior or appearance usually indicate something is wrong; seek help or advice from a veterinarian immediately.
- ✓ It is highly recommended that the calf be treated for internal and external parasites before fair.
- ✓ Wash and clip your calf several times before the fair so it gets used to it
- ✓ When washing, use soap specifically for livestock.
 - Dish soap can remove minerals and oils from the skin causing dry flakes
 - Do not put soap directly on the calf, mix into a bucket of water
 - Just rinsing the calf is good, especially in hot weather
 - ALWAYS start with the legs so that the calf can get used to the cool water; putting cold water on their body first can cause them to go into shock
- ✓ Keep the pen clean and dry. A clean calf environment promotes a fly free atmosphere
- ✓ Keep fly strips in the barn and pen, high enough so the calf and children cannot reach them
- ✓ Keep calf fly spray on hand for when the flies get bad and bother the calf. This will help with health and training
 - Don't overdo the fly spray; it can give the calf diarrhea and they may go off feed when that happens

▪ Training

- ✓ Start slow: Begin by just watching and talking to your project animal. When going to touch your calf, talk to it and stay close to their side so you don't get kicked.
- ✓ After about a week, tie your calf to a fence post or secure object for an hour or two at a time. This will get it used to being restrained and standing still. This is also a good time to brush it down so that it gets used to being touched. For safety reasons, never leave your animal alone when it is tied up.
- ✓ Brush your calf daily to help train the hair
- ✓ Spend time with your calf while he/she is eating
- ✓ Expose your calf to as many sights and sounds as possible, i.e. play a radio in the barn, have other animals around like dogs, geese, horses, etc.

- ✓ Work your calf with a rope halter first; walk him/her around. Then start to use your show halter and show stick.
- ✓ It is ideal to work your calf twice a day, morning and evening, when it is not too hot