

2026 DAIRY STEER & HEIFER PROJECT

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Species Chair:

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IMPORTANT DATES		IMPORTANT INFO	
Registration	December 31, 2025	Minimum Weight @ Fair	1100 lbs.
Birth Date	19-24 Months at Weigh-In		
Possession Date	January 1	Record Book Required for Market Youth ONLY	Saturday of Fair Week
Tagging	January - February	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

- ❖ Exhibitors must be no younger than 10 or 11 years of age on January 1 of the current 4-H Year with one (1) year Feeder experience OR 12 years of age (as of Jan. 1) with no previous experience. Youth must also be registered with 4-H Online 2.0.
- ❖ All Dairy Steer & Heifer participants (Market & Show Only) MUST complete the registration (online or paper) via the Manistee County 4-H Livestock Council NO LATER than December 31, 2024.
- ❖ Members are allowed to register and tag two (2) Steers. However, Steer or Heifer intended for market MUST be identified before either Steer or Heifer is weighed at check-in.
- ❖ Only one (1) Steer or Heifer per member per year may be sold. This can be a maximum two (2) year project, or a maximum two (2) year old animal (either/or) can be sold.
- ❖ 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.
- ❖ Steer tagging will be done as soon as possible after January 1, weather permitting.
- ❖ Beef breeds/beef crosses will be shown in Beef Divisions.
- ❖ Dairy beef projects can be a steer or a heifer:
 - Dairy beef steers need to be properly castrated.
 - Dairy beef heifers must be open (not pregnant).

- ❖ Not all Dairy breeds are naturally polled, calves that have horns must show signs of dehorning. Breeding animals' horns may not exceed two (2) inches in length.
- ❖ Dairy beef projects must weigh a minimum of 1100 pounds at fair weigh-in.

Fair Week Requirements

1. General Requirements

- Weigh-in takes place on 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 strongly recommended when working with your steer/heifer.
- 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 steer/heifer 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 steer/heifer 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. Steers must be shown with a leather steer halter with a chain lead, a show stick, and a comb.
- **Show Attire:** Members participating **with a dairy steer/heifer must** wear a white shirt (long-sleeved) with white pants or white jeans. Solid boots are to be worn. Steers/Heifers 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 Dairy Steer and Heifer participants 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 Dairy Beef Steer/Heifer Project

- Cost:
Animal: \$800-2500
Feed: \$1500-2000 (figure \$2000 if you must purchase all your feed)
- Housing:
Shelter: From rain, snow, and sun
Exercise: Ensure that the steer will have room to move at its final size
- Nutrition:
 - ✓ Fresh water at all times. Ensure that it does not freeze throughout the winter.
 - ✓ Purchased steer/heifer should weigh between 450-600lbs in the fall.
 - ✓ Large beef should be fed 2 to 2.5% of its body weight per day in order to gain 2.25 to 2.5lbs of weight per day (approx. 750lbs of gain)
 - ✓ Feeding from November to August (280 days) will require approx. 5000 lbs of feed
 - ✓ Feed hay at all times.
 - ✓ Most grain mixes contain 14 to 16% protein. If feeding straight corn or oats you will need to feed about 1 to 1-1/2lbs of a protein supplement each day

Different Feeds:

- a. Energy – a mixture of cracked or rolled corn, oats, protein pellets, and vitamins
 - b. Roughage – hay, silage
 - c. Supplements – soybean meal, processed supplements from feed mill/store
- A finished project will have 0.2 to 0.3 inches of fat cover over his back and ribs. As fair approaches, cut back or increase the grain to control the amount of fat finish
 - Be sure any changes to the animal's feed and nutrition are made gradually
 - 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.
- ✓ Wash and clip your steer/heifer several times before the fair so it gets used to it
- ✓ Trim hoofs about 4-6 weeks before the fair
- ✓ Vaccination boosters are highly recommended: injections should include IBR, BRSV, PB, and BVD type I and II vaccines.
- ✓ Large beef projects should be wormed once every 2 months, leaving a proper withdrawal period before slaughter
- Training:
 - ✓ Start slow: Begin by just watching and talking to your project animal.
 - ✓ Tie your steer/heifer 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.
 - ✓ Expose your steer/heifer to as many sights and sounds as possible, i.e. play a radio in the barn.
 - ✓ Be sure to practice with the show halter and show stick that will be used during fair.
- Fair Week Show Attire and Supplies:
 - ✓ White jeans or pants
 - ✓ A white button-down, long-sleeved shirt (a tie or vest can be added)
 - ✓ Solid boots are to be worn
 - ✓ A leather show halter with a chain lead, plastic show comb and show stick
 - ✓ A grain dish and water bucket (the Cattle Barn has automatic waterers)
 - ✓ Both a rope halter and a chain or rope necktie to tie the Steer/Heifer in the stall

Tips

- ASK QUESTIONS!!! If you encounter a situation or a question that you don't know the answer to, be sure to ask for help. Reach out to the species chair, your club leader, another member raising a large beef, or any member of the Livestock Council board. If that person does not have the answer, they WILL help you get it.
- Education – Attend as many education sessions and events as possible to help further your knowledge of your species
- Project Selection – Always focus on looking for good structure: sturdy legs, sound hooves, a straight back, a wide and long loin, and a full/meaty rear leg. Animals should look free from illness and walk without any noticeable stiffness
- Hot Weather – A large beef will tend to lose its appetite when it is too hot. If the temperature outside is above 80 degrees, cool down your steer/heifer with water or a bath; Remember to always start by putting the water on the legs and working up toward the back

- Keep Good Records – Use a calendar to track purchases, weekly feeding schedules, weight gain, and medications. This information is important for your record book and is a great guide to use for next year’s project.