

2014 Michigan 4-H Livestock Judging Program Changes

October 4, 2013

To support more Michigan youth at national livestock judging events along with instilling an additional competitive spirit, recent changes have been approved to allow cross-county state representative teams. The goal of the change is to allow talented individuals, who may not otherwise have the opportunity, the chance to compete on national teams. In the revised program, individuals from any county are combined with individuals from other counties to compete at two of three national contests.

The three national contests will include the North American International Livestock Exposition (NAILE) in Louisville, KY; the American Royal in Kansas City, MO; and the Keystone International Livestock Exposition in Harrisburg, PA.

The most notable difference is the addition of cross-county representative teams. The selection of the two national teams will be based on those 4-H senior division contestants that place in the top 15 at the Michigan 4-H/FFA Livestock Judging Contest each year. These contestants will be invited to participate in state-wide practices post-contest to determine who will represent Michigan at the national level based on availability, age, practice participation and county coach input. This approach imitates the current system used for Michigan 4-H Dairy Judging.

If a member of the top 15 has already competed at NAILE, they will not be eligible to compete at any of the national contests due to contest rules. However, they will be allowed to practice with the team if they choose. Each year, the decision will be made if additional contestants are needed beyond the top 15 due to contestant availability and previous participation at NAILE.

The state winning county senior 4-H team will stay intact as the team representing Michigan at the American Royal. This is also a change as the state winning team would traditionally compete at NAILE. If a member of the state winning senior 4-H team also placed in the top 15 individually, he/she is still eligible to compete for a slot to judge on one of the cross-county state representative teams.

Due to the fact that National FFA rules require teams to be members of the same chapter, no alterations will be made to the state winning FFA team. Six to eight state-wide practices will occur around the state with locations including MSU Campus, Sanilac County, Newaygo County and other additional locations.

Funding and other factors are also a concern in this new program. The decision if three teams complete at national contests will be based on experience and the determination if a cross-county representative team is ready to compete at NAILE. The idea is that this is a three year trial of the new judging program and would allow for small changes and adjustments as needed.

If you have any questions about the program, are interested in hosting a practice workshop, or are interested in donating to the program, please contact MSU Extension Educator, Julie Thelen.