



# 4-H Competitive Events: Absentee Judging of Projects at County Fairs

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## Purpose

Minnesota 4-H Youth Development believes that participation in competitive events enhances the depth and breadth of the learning and leading experience. Minnesota 4-H works to provide an equitable and uniform opportunity for participation in competitive events for its members across the state.

This information sheet outlines the process for families, volunteers and staff to ensure that youth who are unable to attend the in-person judging experience in their county of membership have an opportunity to participate in a virtual experience through which they may be awarded an opportunity to advance to the applicable Minnesota 4-H competitive event.

## Absentee Judging of General (Static) Projects

### Eligibility

4-H members who have a conflict with the general project conference judging in their county of membership may be eligible for absentee judging. To be eligible to exhibit a project while being absent from the conference judging process the following must be in place:

- Absence pre-approved with 4-H staff prior to scheduled date of judging (or other county competitive event). The request will be allowed only in situations such as:
  - Death in the family
  - Once in a lifetime educational opportunity
  - Optional event with no flexibility (e.g. wedding of immediate family)
  - Illness/injury
  - 4-H youth with differing abilities who would prefer a more personalized experience in a controlled one-on-one judging setting
- If unable to attend in-person judging, you are asked to communicate this with staff and indicate this as a part of your fair registration process.
- Exhibit(s) must be dropped off with 4-H staff at the agreed upon time prior to the scheduled judging time at the county fair (or other county competitive event).
  - If exhibit(s) are not able to be dropped off ahead of time, photos or video if applicable must be submitted prior to judging

## Recognition

These exhibits are eligible for Champion/Reserve Champion placing and state fair line-ups and are judged against all exhibits judged in-person. If an exhibit is not on display, premiums may not be awarded. Local staff should have premium discussions with the county fairboard to determine if the fairboard will support paying premiums for virtual exhibits not on display at the county fair.

- The judging platform chosen for general exhibits at the local showcase does not determine the pathway to the state fair. In-person or virtual judging options will need to be selected when registering for the state fair.

## Ways/Means

Best practices for absentee judging of general exhibits follow. Which of these processes will work best within a county may be determined locally.

- Live conference judging with a judge at a pre-arranged time by phone call or other technology-based option (e.g. Zoom, Google Hangout. The 4-H family must make arrangements for their own connections and technology). *This is our first preference for judging.* If you are unable to do this, below are two other acceptable options.
  - Pre-recorded interview with 4-H member utilizing a [standard set of project-based questions](#). 4-H family must make arrangements for their own technology needs.
  - Written story detailing project basis and learning gained. [Standard set of project-based questions](#) should be utilized.

## Absentee Judging of Livestock Projects

### Eligibility

4-H members who have a conflict with the livestock qualifying show in their county of membership may utilize the following options if they wish to pursue an opportunity to advance to the applicable Minnesota 4-H state show.

- Switch county membership prior to the May 15 membership enrollment deadline allowing for exhibition of livestock with the benefit of the ability for advancement to state competition.
- Participate in a livestock demonstration (including the live animal) with the intent to be awarded a trip through the demonstration selection process. Animal used in the demonstration does not need to be the same animal taken to the state fair but must be of the same species. Animal exhibited by 4-H member at the state fair must be on ID sheets prior to the ID deadline for that species. If livestock demonstration day occurs during the county fair, a video recording of the demonstration is acceptable.
- Submit a recorded video of the animal entered with the understanding that they cannot

win a trip to the state fair. The animal exhibited by the 4-H member must be ID'd prior to the ID deadline for that species. The animal will be judged on conformation only and a blue, red, or white ribbon placing will be awarded. No champion or reserve champions will be awarded. Families must connect with local staff prior to utilizing this option.

4-H youth with differing abilities who would prefer a more personalized experience in a controlled one-on-one judging setting may participate in in-person judging or a virtual option.

- In-person option - integrated into regular show format.
- In-person option - one-on-one judging - please contact your local educator prior to the live show to help create a plan for a one-on-one judging session with a species judge. Animal(s) will be evaluated independently and integrated into the live show lineups for champions and state show opportunities.

## Authors

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- Revised by Amber Greeley and Sharon Davis, 2022