



Dairy Cattle Project



The 4-H Dairy Cattle Project helps you become Beyond Ready by building real-world skills in responsible animal care, science, and leadership. You will learn how to select, feed, manage, develop your dairy heifer, and how to raise and evaluate breeding stock. Basic principles of animal science will be applied as you own, care for, and keep records on one or more head of dairy animals. You will explore how scientific research impacts dairy production and the dairy industry. Essential life skills will be practiced for decision making, communication, leadership, planning and organizing, and learning to learn. These skills will prepare you for success.

Beyond Ready

Ready to Lead

Youth involved in 4-H are **two times more likely to have the goal of becoming a leader**. Through real-world experiences and the guidance of caring mentors, they develop the confidence, communication, and decision-making skills needed to lead in today's changing world.

Ready to Serve

Youth who participate in 4-H are **three times more likely to engage in community service**. Service learning provides them with purpose and connection at a time when **more than 53% of Gen Z report feeling lonely**. Through 4-H, youth are empowered to serve with compassion and make a meaningful impact.

Ready to Build

With nearly **10 million unfilled jobs and 77% of employers seeking real-world skills**, 4-H helps youth build what matters. Through hands-on projects and career exploration, youth gain adaptability, problem-solving, and workforce readiness.

Ready to Conquer

While 52% of young people feel like they're failing at life goals, 4-H youth rise with resilience. Backed by research and supported by caring adults, they learn to overcome challenges, set goals, and take charge of their future with confidence.

***Building a Ready
Generation in a
World of Change!***

Starting Out *Beginner:*

- Learn the dairy breeds and traits.
- Identify the parts of your animal.
- Demonstrate multiple showing techniques.
- Research where to find answers to all your dairy questions.
- Learn to properly groom your animal.
- Learn proper feeding practices.

Learning More *Intermediate:*

- Learn to evaluate your animal.
- Develop a feed plan.
- Learn about breeding and calving. Keep herd records.
- Learn to identify, treat, and prevent sickness.
- Understand uses, storage, and administration of medicine.
- Develop a plan for safe milking procedures.

Expanding Horizons *Advanced:*

- Learn body condition scoring.
- Evaluate feed quality and how it affects digestion.
- Use records to make management decisions.
- Investigate signs and causes of mastitis.
- Understand animal welfare issues.
- Identify a career path in dairy production.

Dairy Cattle Project Expand Your Experiences!

Healthy Living

- Create a bio-security plan to protect animal and human health when taking cattle to shows.
- Learn about food safety practices related to milk handling and dairy production.
- Explore the nutritional quality and health benefits of milk, including lactose intolerance.

Science and Agriculture

- Explore dairy cattle genetics, breeding decisions, and how traits impact milk production and herd health.
- Diagram an efficient dairy farm layout, including a milking parlor, housing, waste management, and feed storage areas.
- Learn to read and compare nutrition labels on livestock feed and human foods to understand nutrient levels, similarities, and differences.

Community Vitality

- Volunteer your dairy cow for teaching purposes at a community event.
- Mentor younger youth interested in showing dairy cattle.
- Participate in quiz bowl and other judging contests to further your knowledge.

Communication and the Arts

- Design a poster on dairy cattle breeds.
- Teach others about showmanship techniques.
- Invite others to see your herd and answer questions.

Career Exploration

- Research dairy industry robotics, timed AI, grazing collar technology.
- Job shadow a dairy nutritionist, herdsman, genetics salesperson.
- Explore a contract heifer grower career.
- Create a real/conceptual dairy cattle product or service business and participate in a YEC (Youth Entrepreneurship Challenge) competition.
- Explore cybersecurity jobs in the dairy cattle industry.
- Participate in a 4-H career video contest, spotlighting dairy industry careers.
- Consider a degree in animal science, milling, agriculture education, or agriculture communication. <https://www.ag.k-state.edu/>

Contact Information

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Resources & Events

Participating in educational events and learning opportunities will expand your knowledge and skills in the project area.

- K-State Dairy Cattle Judging Team
- National Dairy Herd Improvement Association
- K-State Junior Dairy Show
- Dairy Days
- State 4-H Livestock Sweepstakes - https://www.asi.k-state.edu/extension/youth-programs/events/livestock_sweepstakes/
- National 4-H Dairy Conference

Curriculum & Resources

- Contact your local Extension office.
- Go to [National 4-H Curriculum](#)
- Go to Kansas 4-H project website <https://www.kansas4-h.org/projects/animal-science/dairy-cattle/>
- Go to K-State Extension Bookstore <https://bookstore.ksre.ksu.edu/topic/4-h-youth-development/dairy-cattle>
- Go to Kansas 4-H Animal Science Webinar Series
- Go to K-State Animal Sciences and Industry

4-H Record Keeping

- [Setting 4-H Project Goals \(4H1100\)](#)
- [Kansas 4-H Record Keeping](#)
- Track milk production, vaccines and health records.
- Record weight and height gains with your dairy heifers.
- Track feed intake rates, noting changes due to ration changes.
- Create a pedigree "family tree" for one animal within your herd.

Project Exhibit Ideas

- Create a poster on a dairy cattle related topic.
- Create a trivia question game to display at the fair.
- Collaborate with state-wide dairy promotion programs to create a local grocery store dairy event.
- Take your dairy animal to a local community nursing home.

