

ILLINOIS 4-H DAIRY CATTLE JUDGING CONTEST

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The Illinois 4-H Dairy Cattle Judging Contest will be held on Saturday, August 22, 2026 in the Livestock Center at the Illinois State Fair in Springfield, Illinois.

Participation: The contest is open to all ages and non-4-H members. However, contestants must be current IL 4-H members and a record of their enrollment must be on file in the respective Extension office in order to be eligible for the IL State 4-H judging team. There is no limit on the number of participants per county. Contestants need not be enrolled in a dairy project; however, this state 4-H dairy judging event is used to support the county/club 4-H dairy curriculum. Derek will work in a small group for first-time contestants and contestants under the age of 10.

Contest Information:

1. Contestants do not need to compete in the SYDP contest in order to participate in the judging contest
2. Registration will be from 7:30 to 8:00 AM in the Livestock Center (open show ring) on the IL State Fairgrounds.
3. The contest will begin at 8:00 AM on August 22, 2026.
4. There will be six (6) classes of cows and heifers selected from various dairy breeds at the Illinois State Fair.
5. All 4-H contestants will be scored as a Jr. Division (13 years of age and younger as of January 1, 2026) or Sr. Division (14 years and older as of January 1, 2026) participant.
6. All participants will be invited to present oral reasons following the contest, but it is not mandatory.
7. Contestants in the Jr. Division will be encouraged and offered the opportunity to give one set of written or oral reasons on a cow class. The Jr. contestants can read or recite from memory their reasons.
8. HOWEVER, contestants in the Sr. Division who will be considered for selection to the IL State 4-H Team will be required to give two sets of oral reasons on cow classes. Two (2) minutes will be allowed per class to give oral reasons to the official judge.
9. Ten (10) minutes will be allowed for judging each class when no reasons are required; twenty (20) minutes will be allowed on reasons classes.

Illinois Team Selected for the National Contest

The state 4-H dairy cattle judging team will be selected from participants in this contest. To be eligible for selection, members must have been 14 years of age and not older than 18 years of age as of January 1, 2026. The selected 2026 Illinois 4-H Dairy Judging Team will participate at the National Contest in Madison, Wisconsin.

Results and Awards

The summary results from this dairy contest will be emailed within five (5) working days of the contest to the Unit/County Extension Office. Detailed results and ribbons will be mailed within 2 weeks of the contest. Individual contestants will be ranked in three groups with blue, red and white ribbons awarded. Team scores will not be a part of this contest and team ribbons will not be awarded.