



EXTENSION SNAPSHOT

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4-H Livestock Day takes required certification to the next level of learning and engagement

If you ask most working adults about their required, annual certification processes you may get an eye roll with their response. But if you ask local 4-H youth about their required, annual Youth for the Quality Care of Animals certification you will get an ear full as they tell you about everything they got to do at 4-H Livestock Day.

Each year Peoria County 4-H Program Coordinator Kristi Smith takes the YQCA training and “super-sizes” it. “This is one of my favorite programs to plan for our members,” Smith explained. “We have so many local experts who are just as passionate as I am and we all want to help our 4-H members learn more and stay excited for what they can do in the ag industry.”

On February 17, over 50 youth from Peoria, Fulton, Mason, Tazewell, and Knox Counties gathered at Raber Packing Co. for the 3rd annual 4-H Livestock Day. This event focuses on livestock management, as well as the Youth for the Quality Care of Animals required certification.

“This year we added a skill-a-thon to the hands-on activities of the day,” Smith mentioned. “It included stations on general livestock facts, equipment recognition, medication labels, and livestock breeds that all reinforced important concepts in animal science. The Illinois State 4-H Skill-a-thon Team provided the materials.” In addition to YQCA, youth heard from industry professionals about best practices for care of their animals and had fun practicing their showmanship skills.

One participant remarked that their favorite part of the day was the skill-a-thon. It challenged them to think critically and test their knowledge in a fun way. Livestock Day provides participants with the opportunity to develop skills in decision-making, showmanship, biosecurity, and practical knowledge that they can take back to their own farms and share with their families. For many, it serves as preparation for the upcoming show season.

“4-H Livestock Day gives our members the confidence and knowledge to succeed in the show ring and beyond,” said Smith. “It’s about building skills that last a lifetime.

“I love seeing the camaraderie among participants,” she continued. “Throughout the day, youth work together, share insights, and encourage one another. You can see the positive and supportive 4-H spirit in action.”

Other perks of the day included a delicious lunch by Rabers and a tour. Participants also received a t-shirt from the Peoria County 4-H Auction Committee and meat thermometers from the Illinois Pork Producers.

As Peoria County 4-H continues to expand opportunities for youth in agriculture and beyond, events like this remain an invaluable part of the program’s mission. Whether a first-time attendee or a seasoned livestock enthusiast, everyone walked away with new knowledge, strengthened skills, and a deeper passion for animal science.



Photo by Kristi Smith | Illinois Extension

A new highlight of the 3rd annual 4-H Livestock Day was a skill-a-thon that featured stations on general knowledge, equipment recognition, medication labels, and livestock breeds. Local 4-H members love completing their YQCA training because of the additional, fun, engaging activities that are part of the day-long program.

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