

## EXTENSION SNAPSHOT

Fulton-Mason-Peoria-Tazewell Unit

March 2022



Illinois Extension

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS URBANA-CHAMPAIGN

# Fulton County 4-H Livestock Judging Team delivers results

Communication. Confidence. Character. These are some of the skills and traits that Fulton County 4-H Livestock Judging Coach Robyn Hendel has been fostering in her team members since 2014.

The Fulton County 4-H Livestock Judging Team is a 4-H Special Interest (SPIN) Club that focuses on judging beef, sheep, and swine. According to Robyn she has had anywhere from 6 to 15 members each year. The members work as a team to gain knowledge in these project areas, develop their critical thinking skills, and make connections across the state. For some, the skills lead them to college scholarships and careers.

No matter their career aspirations, the knowledge, skills, and connections they gain are beneficial throughout their lives. Youth learn effective oral communication techniques and how to defend their placing of each class of animals. Eye contact while presenting their reasons is another skill learned in this club. Practicing good communication builds confidence in the members' ability to meet new people at the various livestock judging competitions. Confidence brings out the best abilities of timid members, while fostering a friendly rivalry during competition.

The SPIN club meets at local farms where they observe animals while learning what characteristics to look for in each species and practicing judging classes. Then they travel to judging contests throughout the state to put their skills to the test. The members have a limited amount of time (10 to 12 minutes) to observe, take notes, and determine their rankings. Members also give oral reasons to back up their decision for placing each livestock class.

Last year's participation included nine contests with both junior and senior teams vying for top honors. The junior team won both the Geneseo FFA Alumni Contest and Joliet Junior College Contest. Several team members placed 1st individual in the junior and senior questions division. The culminating event for the junior team was winning the 2022 State 4-H Livestock Judging Contest. Former team members have been, or are currently judging livestock or meats at Lincoln Land Community College, Black Hawk College, and University of Illinois.

The skills obtained through membership in the 4-H Livestock Judging Club are impactful throughout the 4-H member's life. Good communication skills, eye contact, meeting new people, responsibility, pride, self-confidence, and teamwork all help build good character.



Photo provided by Robyn Hendel

*Fulton 4-H Livestock Judging Team and 4-H SPIN Club members learned valuable skills and enjoy competing throughout the state. Throughout the club's nine year existence they have collected a long list of contest top honors and watched club members go on to judge at the college level. Pictured above at a recent contest are (L—R) Robyn Hendel, Taylor H., Izzy K., Ella E., and Ali J.*

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