

I live in the city of Watertown. Can I participate in 4-H animal programming or show animals at the county fair?

Showing my family's dairy cattle at the county fair is one of my fondest memories from my childhood. The rides, the animals, the displays, the food – who can forget the taste of hot funnel cakes? Every minute spent with my 4-H friends and animals -- halter-breaking my heifers, getting soaked while giving that first bath, and wearing a layer of cow hair after clipping them -- was well spent.

Preparing and showing an animal at the county fair will help you learn the responsibility of taking care of an animal while making friends and meeting members of the community. You'll also learn about agriculture in the North Country. Next year's Jefferson County Fair is scheduled for July 12-17, 2022. If you want to show a cow, goat, or rabbit at next year's county fair, you can start in on the fun now! Because there is much to learn when raising animals, it is best to start on your animal science interest no later than January.

To show an animal through 4-H at the county fair, you must first be enrolled in 4-H. The largest youth development program worldwide, 4-H allows kids to explore not only agriculture and animal science but also topics like robotics, math, gardening, crafts, the outdoors, and healthy living. Our 4-H clubs will help you learn how to care for your animals and show them at the Jefferson County Fair. Cornell Cooperative Extension of Jefferson County's Livestock Club is for youth interested in beef cattle, goats, and sheep. Our Peeps and Squeaks Club is for those interested in smaller animals such as rabbits, poultry, or guinea pigs. The Jefferson County Dairy Club focuses on dairy cattle and participates in Dairy Bowl, which is a quiz bowl related to dairy cattle and the dairy industry. We also have clubs dedicated to horses and riding, a Furry Friends 4-H Dog Program, and more!

What do you do if you don't live on a farm? Some farmers will lease an animal for you to show. Visit a local farm and ask if they can help, or better yet pick up the phone and call Jefferson County 4-H at our office in Watertown. We can help you find a local farm willing to work with you. If animals aren't your thing, the 4-H program also allows youth to enter non-animal projects into the fair, ranging from photography to sewing to engineering.

4-H youth can also sell their animals in the annual 4-H Livestock Auction. The 4-H Livestock auction allows youth to market their beef, sheep, goats, or pigs. Consumers can purchase an animal that was lovingly raised by a local 4-H'er and help fund a variety of opportunities such as raising next year's project animal or even college tuition.

Regardless of which species you are interested in showing, Jefferson County 4-H can help! For more information about animal-related 4-H clubs and all the organization has to offer, please visit <http://ccejefferson.org/4-h-youth>. Best of all, joining 4-H is free.

By Abigail Jantzi, *Dairy & Livestock Specialist*
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