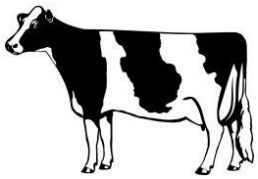
2026 DAIRY BEEF PROJECT POLICIES and PROCEDURES



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******Important Dates and Information******			
Registration	November 3rd, 2025	***Minimum Weight @ Fair***	1000lbs
Birth Date	After December 1st, 2024	***Possession Date***	November 1st 2025
Tagging	November 8th and 9th 2025	***Record Books Due***	Required 9/7/2026
Thank you Notes Due		Required 10/5/2026	

Participating 4-H youth must abide by all general rules and regulations listed in the Northwest Michigan Livestock Council's Policies and Procedures books and the Premium Book of the Northwestern Michigan Fair. That includes, but is not limited to, Code of Conducts, registration deadlines, showmanship and market requirements, record book and thank you letter requirements, etc.

REGISTRATION REQUIREMENTS

- To participate in a 4-H market dairy beef project, youth must attain the age of thirteen (13) or older by January 1st of the calendar year or be twelve (12) years of age with at least 2 years of market cattle experience. Youth must be registered with 4-H online 2.0
- All dairy beef participants (market and show only) MUST complete the online registration via the Northwestern Michigan 4-H Livestock Council's website NO LATER than midnight on November 3rd, 2025.
    - OPTIONAL: Each 4-H Market Dairy Beef participant may register an extra project animal for $10, to be paid on tagging day. The extra Dairy Steer/Heifer may only be used within the

family that purchased the animal and only one (1) marked project may be brought to the fair per 4-H member.

- To participate in the 4-H livestock shows and auction at the fair, youth must follow all registration requirements listed in the Northwestern Michigan Fair's Premium Book.
- To participate in the 4-H livestock auction at the fair, youth much register and compete in the appropriate showmanship AND market classes.

ANIMAL REQUIREMENTS

- All cattle MUST have an official radio frequency identification (RFID) electronic tag in their ear before they leave the farm on which they were born.
- Dairy Beef projects must be born on or after December 1st of the previous year.
- Dairy Beef projects must be in possession or under the care of the 4-H member by November 1st.
- Dairy Beef projects must be 100% dairy breed: Holstein, Brown Swiss, Guernsey, Jersey, etc. The calf can be a cross of 2 or more dairy breeds but CAN NOT be crossed with a beef breed.
- Dairy Beef projects can be a dairy steer or dairy heifer
- Dairy Beef Heifers must be open (not pregnant)
- Dairy Beef projects must be dehorned and show signs of dehorning. This should be done early so that it is healed by fair time. Horns can not exceed 3".
- Dairy Beef projects must weigh a minimum of 1000lbs at fair check-in.
- MDARD states that no lactating dairy cattle are allowed and if the cattle are originating from a licensed dairy premise's they are required to follow the rules outlined by MDARD for exhibition per the following website http://www.michigan.gov/mdard/animals/id-movement-and-cattle#exhibition

FAIR WEEK REQUIREMENTS

GENERAL REQUIREMENTS:

- Weigh in takes place on the first Saturday of fair
- Youth must be present or must have made prior arrangements with the species chair for someone else to weigh their animal.
- Protective boots are required at all times when working with your steer/heifer
- NO feed, feed bags or supplies are to be left in the barn (everything must be stored at your campsite)
- Youth are responsible for keeping their pens clean all week!

ANIMAL CARE REQUIREMENTS:

- **Animals shall be treated humanely at all times!** Any response of unethical, inhumane,

and/or abusive treatment or actions that cause distress and/or suffering to an animal will be evaluated by the Species Chair/Fair Superintendent/Fair Veterinarian, MSU Extension Staff and/or other appropriate individuals and may lead to disqualification and removal from all 4-H and Open Livestock shows held at the fair.

- Youth are responsible for providing enough grain and roughage to care for their steer/heifer throughout the entire week.
- Youth are responsible for feeding, watering and caring for their animal the entire week.
- ADMINISTRATION OF ANYTHING OTHER THAN GRAIN/FEED, HAY OR WATER MUST BE CLEARED THROUGH THE LIVESTOCK COUNCIL SPECIES CHAIR, THE FAIR SUPERINTENDENT AND THE FAIR VETERINARIAN. Documentation must be signed and the Species Chair and/or Fair Superintendent MUST be present during administration.
    - This includes, but is not limited to electrolyte replacements (Gatorade, Pedialyte, Electrolyte Powders, etc.); medications (Aspirin, Pepto Bismol, Antibiotics, etc.). Bloat Drench, etc.
    - Failure to follow this policy will result in disqualification and removal from all 4-H and Open Livestock shows held at the fair.

SHOW DAY POLICIES:

- Failure to comply with these policies WILL result in a disqualification from the show.
- All cattle barns will close 2hrs prior to the start of the first cattle show.
- During the barn closure times, only the 4-H'er and ONE (1) support person of their choice may enter the barn and/or wash rack areas.
- The 4-H'er and their support person may fit and prepare the steer/heifer for show.
- Use of false tail heads or adding of hair or hemp is prohibited
- NO FORCED ADMINISTRATION OF FLUIDS TO CREATE A GUT FILL WITH BE ALLOWED.
- Possession of the equipment used to produce gut fill will not be allowed.
- Completely clean and scrape down pens
- Stall mats need to be taken home. All mats not taken home at the end of fair will become property of the fair.
- Bars on the pen dividers need to be scrubbed and wiped down.

AFTER FAIR WEEK REQUIREMENTS

- All market Dairy Beef participants must turn in a completed record book at the September Livestock Council meeting to the specie chair.
- Electronic copies of a record book will be not accepted.
- A THANK YOU note and 5x7 Auction photo must be given to your buyer and a copy of the thank you note is due at the October Livestock Council meeting.

- Failure to submit a completed records book at the September meeting and a Thank You note at the October meeting of the 4-H Livestock Council WILL result in a suspension from 4-H Livestock classes and auction help during the NWMI Fair the following year. Suspended youth who complete their record book and submit it to the 4-H Livestock Council by the November meeting that same year will again be eligible to register for 4-H Livestock classes and auction held during the NWMI Fair the following year.

IMPORTANT INFORMATION & TIPS FOR A SUCCESSFUL DAIRY BEEF PROJECT

- Cost of the animal $800-$2500
- Cost of the feed $1500-$2000 (figure $2000 if you must purchase all your feed)
- Housing: these animals need to have shelter from rain, snow and sun
- Exercise: You as a 4-H'er need to make sure that your Dairy Beef project will have room to move at its final size and it needs to be walked daily by you.
- Nutrition:
    - Fresh water at all times, ensure that it does not freeze throughout the winter months
    - A newly purchased Dairy Beef steer or heifer should weigh between 450-600lbs in the fall
    - Dairy Beef should be fed 3% of its body weight per day in order to gain 2.25 to 2.5lbs of weight per day (approx.. 750lbs of gain)
    - Feeding from November to August is about 280 days and will require approximately 5000lbs of feed.
    - Dairy Beef need to be fed hay at all times
    - Most grain mixes contain 14-16% protein. If feeding straight corn or oats you will need to feed about 1-1.5lbs of protein supplement each day
- Different types of feed:
    - Energy: corn (cracked or whole shelled), processed grain from feed mill/store
    - Roughage – hay, silage
    - Supplements – soybean meal, processed supplements from feed mill/store
- A finished project will have .2 - .3 inches of fat over their back and ribs. As fair approaches, cut back or increase the grain to control the amount of fat finish. Be sure any changes to the animal's feed and nutrition are done gradually.
- Health:
    - Observe daily, note any differences in behavior (not eating, not getting up, sluggish, ears down, etc.) or any difference in appearance (bloating, runny nose, mucus eyes, etc.). Changes in behavior or appearance usually indicates something is wrong; seek help or advice from a veterinarian immediately.
    - Wash and clip your Dairy Beef steer/heifer several times before the fair so its gets used to it.
    - Trim hooves about 4-6 weeks before the fair.
    - Vaccination boosters are highly recommended: injection should include IBS, BRSV, PB and

BVD type I and II vaccines
    - It is recommended to deworm calves upon arrival at home and thereafter as needed in the fall and/or spring and prior to fair, while following appropriate withdrawal times.
- Training:
    - Start slow: begin by just watching and talking to your project animal.
    - Tie your Dairy Beef steer/heifer to a fence post or secure object for an hour or two at a time. This will get it used to being restrained and standing still. This is also a good time to brush it down so that is gets used to being touched. For safety reasons, NEVER leave your animal alone when it is tied up.
    - Expose your Dairy Beef steer/heifer to as many sights/sounds as possible, i.e. play a radio in the barn, let them hear different noises, see different things around them
    - Be sure to practice with the show halter and show stick that will be used during fair.
- Fair Week Show Attire:
    - Clean pants or jeans free of rips and/or holes
    - Long or short sleeve dress shirt (button down is recommended)
    - Protective boots or leather shoes
    - A show halter, show comb and show stick

TIPS

- ASK QUESTIONS!!! If you encounter a situation or a question that you don't know the answer to, be sure to ask for help. Reach out to the species chair, your club leader, another member raising large beef or any member of the Livestock Council Board. If that person does not have the answer, they WILL help you get it.
- Education – Attend as many education sessions and events as possible to help further your knowledge of your species.
- Project Selection – Always focus on looking for good structure, sturdy legs, sound hooves, straight back, a wide/long loin and a full/meaty rear leg. Animals should look free from illness and walk without any noticeable stiffness.
- Hot Weather – A Dairy Beef will tend to lose its appetite when it is too hot, if the temperature outside is above 80 degrees, cool down your Dairy Beef project with water or a bath. Remember to always start by putting water on the legs and working up toward the back.
- Keep Good Records – Use a calendar to track purchases, weekly feeding schedules, weight gain and medication. This information is important for your record book and is a great guide to use for next year's project.

Additional Websites:

Northwest Michigan 4-H Livestock Council - Northwest Michigan 4-H Livestock Council

Home | Northwestern Michigan Fair