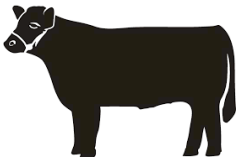

2026 LARGE BEEF PROJECT POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Species-Chair:
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IMPORTANT DATES		IMPORTANT INFO	
Registration	November 3rd, 2025	Minimum Weight @ Fair	1000lbs
Birth Date	After January 1st,2025		
Possession	November 1st, 2025	Record Book (Both Market and Show only)	Required Due: 9/7/26
Tagging & Weigh-in	**Mandatory @ Fairgrounds** November 8th & 9th, 2025	Thank You Note	Required Due: 10/5/26

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

I. Registration Requirements

A. To participate in a 4-H market large beef project, youth must attain the age of thirteen (13) or older by January 1st of that calendar year, OR be twelve (12) years of age with at least 2 years of market cattle experience. Youth must also be registered with 4-H Online 2.0

B. All Large Beef Participants (Market and Show only) MUST complete the online registration via the Northwest Michigan 4-H Livestock Council's website NO LATER THAN midnight on November 3rd, 2025.

C. Optional: Each 4-H market large beef participant may register an extra project animal for $10, to be paid on tagging day. The extra steer/heifer may only be used within the family that purchased the animal, and only one (1) market project may be brought to the fair per 4-H member.

D. Project Limit: Each 4-H member may participate in one **(1) 4-H cattle project** Dairy Beef, Dairy Feeder, Jr. Beef or Large Beef.

E. Additional Animals: Any additional cattle owned by the 4-H member(s) may still be shown, but **only in the Open Class divisions** of the Northwestern Michigan Fair.

F. Project Declaration: Members must **declare their official 4-H cattle project** to their species chair by the registration deadline of the Northwestern Michigan Fair. All other 4-H cattle project registrations must be **withdrawn before the fair registration deadline.**

G. 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.

H. To participate in the 4-H livestock auction at the fair, youth must register and compete in the appropriate showmanship AND market classes.

II. Animal Requirements

A. 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.
B. Large beef projects must be born on or after January 1st of the previous year.
C. Large beef projects must be in possession or under the care of the 4-H member by November 1st, 2025.
D. Large beef projects must be 100% beef breed (no dairy): Angus, Hereford, Simmental, Shorthorn, Belted Galloway, Charolais, etc. The calf can be a cross of 2 or more beef breeds, but cannot be crossed with a dairy breed. (Smaller/Mini Breeds such as Dexter and Highlander cattle cannot be used in the large beef program)
E. Large beef projects can be a steer or a heifer.
   a. Large beef steers require proper castration.
   b. Large beef heifers must be open (not pregnant).
F. All heifers are required to have CIDRs administered upon arrival at the Fair. The Livestock Council Species Chair, Fair Superintendent, and Fair Veterinarian reserve the authority to conduct pregnancy checks as deemed necessary.
G. Not all beef breeds are naturally polled; calves that have horns must show signs of dehorning. Horns cannot exceed 3" long.
H. Nose rings are not permitted on large beef animals exhibited at the fair and must be removed before arrival at the fair.
I. To be eligible for a market class, Large beef projects must weigh a minimum of 1000 pounds at final weigh-in.
   a. There are no re-weighs allowed.
   b. Members who have a large beef that weighs less than 1000 pounds at final weigh-in will still be eligible to participate in 4-H Showmanship, but will NOT be eligible to participate in 4-H market or the livestock auction.
   c. No "For Sale" signs can be posted, and the members CANNOT sell the large beef via private treaty on the fairgrounds.

III. Fair Week Requirements

A. General Requirements:
   1. A Large Beef Health Record and a NWMF Health agreement must be filled out, signed, and presented to the Species Chair and/or Barn Superintendent to unload at the fair.
   2. Weigh-in takes place on the first Saturday of the fair.
   3. Youth must be present or must have made prior arrangements with the species chair for someone else to weigh their animal.
   4. Protective boots or leather shoes are recommended at all times when working with your steer/heifer.
   5. No feed, feed bags, or supplies are to be left in the barn (everything must be stored at the campsite).
   6. Youth are responsible for keeping their pens clean all week.

B. Animal Care Requirements:

1. Youth are responsible for providing enough grain and hay to care for their steer/heifer throughout the entire week.
2. Youth are responsible for feeding, watering, and caring for their animal the **entire** week.
3. 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 Superintendent MUST be present during administration.
    a. This includes but IS NOT LIMITED TO: Electrolyte replacements (Gatorade, Pedialyte, electrolyte powders, etc.); Medications (Aspirin, Pepto Bismol, Antibiotics, etc.); Bloat Drench; etc.
    b. Failure to follow this policy WILL result in disqualification and removal from all 4-H and Open Livestock Shows held at the fair.

C. Show Day Policies:
1. **Failure to comply with these policies WILL result in disqualification from the show.**
2. All cattle barns will close 2 hours prior to the start of the first cattle show.
    a. During 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.
3. The 4-H'er and their support person may fit and prepare the steer/heifer for show.
4. Use of false tail heads or adding of hair or hemp is prohibited.
5. No forced administration of fluids to create gut fill will be allowed.
6. Possession of the equipment used to produce gut fill will not be allowed.

D. Fair End Responsibilities:
1. Completely clean and scrape down pens.
2. Stall mats need to be taken home. All mats not taken home at the end of the fair become the property of the fair.
3. Bars on the pen dividers need to be scrubbed and wiped down.

IV. <u>After Fair Requirements</u>

A. Youth are required to turn in one completed record book (Showmanship or market). If youth are exhibiting in market or multiple species, they are required to complete the record book for the market project. All market and show-only large beef participants must turn in a completed record book at the September Livestock Council meeting to the species chair. Electronic copies of a record book **will not** be accepted.
B. A thank you and 5 x 7 Auction photo must be given to your buyer, and a copy of the thank you note is due at the October Livestock Council meeting.
C. Failure to submit a completed record book at the September meeting and a thank you at the October Meeting of the 4-H Livestock Council WILL result in suspension from the 4-H Livestock classes and auction held 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 the auction held during the NW MI Fair the following year.

V. Important Information & Tips for a Successful Large Beef Project

A. Cost:
   a. Animal: $1500-3000
   b. Feed: $2000-3000

B. Housing:
   a. Shelter: From rain, snow, and sun
   b. Exercise: Ensure that the steer will have room to move at its final size

C. Nutrition:
   a. Fresh water at all times. Ensure that it does not freeze throughout the winter.
   b. Purchased steer/heifer should weigh between 450-600lbs in the fall.
   c. Large beef should be fed 2 to 2.5% of its body weight per day in order to gain 2.25 to 2.5lbs of weight per day (approx. 750lbs of gain)
   d. Feeding from November to August (280 days) will require approx. 5000 lbs of feed
   e. Feed hay at all times.
   f. Most grain mixes contain 14 to 16% protein. If feeding straight corn or oats, you will need to feed about 1 to 1-1/2lbs of a protein supplement each day
   g. Different Feeds:
      i. Energy – a mixture of cracked or rolled corn, oats, protein pellets, and vitamins
      ii. Roughage – hay, silage
      iii. Supplements – soybean meal, processed supplements from feed mill/store
   h. A finished project will have 0.2 to 0.3 inches of fat cover over its back and ribs. As fair approaches, cut back or increase the grain to control the amount of fat finish
   i. Be sure any changes to the animal's feed and nutrition are done gradually

D. Health:
   a. Observe daily: Note any difference 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 indicate something is wrong; seek help or advice from a veterinarian immediately.
   b. Wash and clip your steer/heifer several times before the fair so it gets used to it
   c. Trim hoofs about 4-6 weeks before the fair
   d. Vaccination boosters are highly recommended: injections should include IBR, BRSV, PB, and BVD type I and II vaccines.
   e. Deworming is an important part of beef project health care, but it should be done strategically. Treating too often can cause parasites to become resistant. Most beef projects are dewormed at weaning and again once or twice a year based on management needs. Always follow product label directions and allow for the proper withdrawal period before slaughter.

E. Training:
   a. Start slow: Begin by just watching and talking to your project animal.
   b. Tie your 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 it gets used to being touched. For safety reasons, never leave your animal alone when it is tied up.

c. Expose your steer/heifer to as many sights and sounds as possible; i.e. play a radio in the barn.
d. Be sure to practice with the show halter and show stick that will be used during fair.

F. Fair Week Show Attire and Supplies:
a. Clean pants or jeans (free of rips or holes)
b. Long or short sleeve dress shirt (button-down is recommended)
c. Protective boots or leather shoes
d. A show halter, show comb, and show stick.
e. A water bucket and a grain dish
f. Both a rope halter **and** a chain or rope necktie to tie the steer/heifer in the stall.

VI. Tips

A. 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 a large beef, or any member of the Livestock Council board. If that person does not have the answer, they WILL help you get it.
B. Education – Attend as many education sessions and events as possible to help further your knowledge of your species.
C. Project Selection – Always focus on looking for good structure: sturdy legs, sound hooves, a straight back, a wide and long loin, and a full/meaty rear leg. Animals should look free from illness and walk without any noticeable stiffness.
D. Hot Weather – A large beef will tend to lose its appetite when it is too hot. If the temperature outside is above 80 degrees, cool down your steer/heifer with water or a bath; Remember to always start by putting the water on the legs and working up toward the back.
E. Keep Good Records – Use a calendar to track purchases, weekly feeding schedules, weight gain, and medications. This information is important for your record book and is a great guide to use for next year's project.