

4-H Frequently Asked Questions

Commonly asked questions and answers about 4-H in Des Moines County

What is 4-H?

4-H is a program for youth with an interest in leadership development and learning life skills such as communication, teamwork and responsibility. 4-H is supported by Iowa State University Extension and hundreds of local volunteers who serve as leaders, youth committee, and as members of various committees.

Who is eligible to be a 4-H member and when can I join?

Any youth in grades 4 through 12 is eligible to join a club in Des Moines County. You do not have to live in the county. 4-H is available to all youth. There is a myth that you must live on a farm, which is not true. 54% percent of the membership is female and 46% is male. A youth may join at any time during the year. However, to exhibit at this summer's county fair you must join before May 15 of this year. There are also opportunities for youth in grades K-3 to join Clover Kids.

Is there a cost associated with being a member or going to the fair?

There is a program fee of \$30 per youth per year. Our Extension Council graciously pays \$10.00 of this fee per member. Clubs may decide how to pay the remainder of the fee. Some clubs will pay program fees out of the club treasury. Other clubs may ask members to pay the \$20 fee. Projects created or maintained by a member may require cash expenditures. These projects are the member's choice. Educational project Literature is available for a nominal fee. Individual clubs may charge annual dues. This is determined by each club. Each exhibitor at the Des Moines County Fair is required to pay stall fees for animals as well. The Fair Board pays premium money to youth for each project exhibited.

How do I join a 4-H club?

You can join any one of over 20 clubs located throughout the county by calling the Extension Office at 319/394-9433. Our office hours are Monday through Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. The staff will provide you with written material about 4-H, suggest clubs in your area, & take you through the enrollment process.

Can I belong to more than one club?

Yes, a member may join more than one club, but will designate one as their primary club. Members may also transfer their membership to another club if they so desire by contacting their club leader and the Extension Office.

Are there any special project clubs?

Yes, we have a shooting sports club and we are starting first lego league club.

A couple of 4-H clubs offer a particular interest in a certain area. For example, the Horse & Pony club's primary focus is on horses and ponies. No matter what the club's central areas of interest are, all project areas are available to any and all members wanting to participate in them, unless there is an age requirement.

Of what importance are club meetings and who should attend?

Club meetings serve as the information link for members. Members receive help on projects, application forms, and programs. Members also get involved in service projects, make friends and learn about life skills. All members are highly encouraged to attend meetings on a regular basis. Parents also are encouraged to attend to stay informed on 4-H news and events. Meetings are usually held once a month.

Can a member enroll in additional project areas after they turn in their member enrollment form?

Yes, a member may add additional project areas at any time by contacting their club leader. However, information is often sent to members in certain projects areas.

Therefore, it is important that members sign up for project areas as soon as possible. Just because a member lists a project area to explore, does not mean they are required to complete an exhibit in that area.

What is a project meeting?

A project meeting is different than a club meeting. A project meeting will involve all youth enrolled or interested in a specific project area such as photography, dog obedience, poultry, etc. Members learn various aspects of the project care and preparation from volunteers who are experts on the subject matter.

What is a record book and do I have to complete one?

Record keeping is a valuable life long skill. The record book is a permanent summary of your activities, projects and participation throughout the year. County awards are given to members based on their record book. These records can serve as a financial record for planning. All members are strongly encouraged to complete a record book each year. All forms necessary to complete a record book are available from the Extension Office.

How does a youth get to show at the county fair?

The county fair is open to any youth who is a member of a Des Moines County 4-H or FFA club. Youth must meet entry deadlines to exhibit at the county fair. Contact the Extension Office or your club leader for information about project requirements.

If I nominate my animal/livestock projects by May 15 or at a weigh-in, are there any other requirements that I need to fulfill before the county fair to be eligible to exhibit?

Yes, the blue entry card must be completed and turned in by July 1. The member uses this card to list all the animal project classes that they intend to exhibit in during the fair. This card is used to generate the show orders and is a necessary part of the fair management process. Some livestock areas have certain health requirements as well. These requirements are listed in the 4-H fairbook. Remember to turn the animal/livestock nomination forms into the Extension Office by May 15. It is very important to enter every class you would like to participate in by July 1.

Are there any animal/livestock projects that are not nominated or identified by May 15?

Yes, members do not nominate animals in the cat, pet, rabbit or poultry departments. All other animals (Breeding/Market Beef, Horse/Pony, Dog, Swine, Sheep, Goats, Dairy, Bucket Bottle) must have a nomination form turned in by May 15. All animals, including eggs must be entered on the blue animal entry form by July 1.

How do I exhibit non-livestock entries at the fair?

Currently, there is no pre-fair entry for non-livestock projects. Members will receive an entry form to list their projects. You will bring this form with you when you have your projects judged on the Tuesday the day before the first day of fair. Each exhibit also requires an entry tag and exhibit record form.

Does every 4-H member have to give an educational presentation?

Yes, all 4-H members are encouraged to participate in the educational presentation process. Members should give at least one educational presentation at the club level each year and may choose to participate at the county level. Members grow and learn by this participation.

What is an Educational Presentation and how is it different from a Working Presentation?

An educational presentation is a presentation by a member(s) on a topic of their choice. Topics should be age appropriate. The presentation format may take any form (speech, demonstration, role play, etc.). The presentation should last 5-25 minutes (dependent on age of 4-H'er).

A Working Exhibit will involve members of the audience. The audience will actually be involved in the construction of an item or in the educational activity.

Does a member have to take a project to the county fair?

All members are highly encouraged to take at least one project to the county fair. The fair is the culmination of preparation and learning. Friendly competition and fellowship are a valuable part of learning. Members may enroll in as many project areas as they desire, but are not required to complete a project in each area for which they enroll.

What are the due dates for various project and 4-H requirements?

Note: This is not a complete list. Other information and deadlines will be listed in your 4-H newsletter, sent in the mail, or given at your club meetings.

Livestock weigh-ins are as follows:

- Market Beef – December
- Swine – April
- Sheep/Goat– April

October/November

4-H enrollment forms are due to the Extension Office. Members may enroll after that date, however, educational literature and project meeting notices may not be sent to the member on a timely basis.

May 15

- Livestock I.D. (106) forms due to Extension Office

July 1

- Blue entry cards are due to the Extension Office. This includes ALL animal/livestock projects. Currently, non-livestock projects do not have a pre-entry deadline.
- Stall entry fees due to Fair Board
- Communication entries are due to Extension Office
- Clothing entries are due to the Extension Office
- State Fair entries are due to the Extension Office

This summary is designed to cover basic common questions that members and families may have. It does not answer all questions in detail but is to serve as a general guide. For more information about 4-H, project areas, and requirements, please contact your club leader or the Des Moines County Extension Office at 319/394-3944.