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4-H Fair Exhibit Judging



The 4-H Mission



- 4-H is an educational program for youth. Its primary mission is to help young people become self-directing, productive and contributing members of society.
- At the heart of the 4-H program are educational experiences through project work in over 200 subjects. These experiences — plus participation in group meetings, special activities, camps, contests, trips and tours — provide opportunities that contribute to the growth and development of the 4-H member.

Why Exhibits?

- The 4-H project is designed to help young people learn practical skills, develop abilities and acquire knowledge on topics of interest to them.
- The county fair is just “one part” of the total learning experience for youth involved with 4-H youth development programs. An exhibit is “one part” of participation in a project area.
- Exhibit judging in a fair gives 4-H’ers an opportunity to know where their exhibit stands in relation to other exhibits and how well they did compared to an ideal. The award given recognizes the completion of a task.

Ages and Expectations

Cloverbud – Member age 5-8 years old
 *Children of this age are not developmentally ready for competition. Cloverbud exhibits should be given participation ribbons and judges’ comments only.

Novice – Member age 9-11 years old

Junior – Member age 12-13 years old

Senior – Member age 14-19 years old

New Mexico ages are as of September 1st of the current year.

Please consider that just because a member is junior or senior age, they may not have prior 4-H experience.



Why Judge?

- ▶ Encouragement from one adult can make a big difference in a child’s life.
- ▶ 4-H’ers themselves are more important than the exhibits they make or grow.
- ▶ Ribbons and awards will fade, but the things 4-H’ers learn last a lifetime.
- ▶ As a judge, you’re a teacher, an example, and an inspiration to young people.



Where to Judge?

New Mexico 4-H Youth may exhibit in County Achievement Days, County Fairs, Regional Fairs and the New Mexico State Fair. All of these events need judges throughout the year.

New Mexico State University is an equal opportunity/affirmative action employer and educator. NMSU and the U.S. Department of Agriculture cooperating.



Judging Systems



American: The American Judging System is a common method in livestock judging. Each entry is considered against every other entry and judged against a standard or ideal. The final result is a rank order where the entry considered by the judge(s) to be the best is first, followed by second and so on.

Danish: The purpose of the Danish system is to recognize all individuals for reaching a level of achievement or performance based on age and experience in the project.

Modified Danish: Modified Danish is a combination of the above methods where three ribbon groups are designated based on how nearly the entries approach the ideal. A top blue may be chosen from a class to be considered for champion, if the judges deem necessary and appropriate, or a predetermined number of entries in the blue ribbon group could be placed using the American System to rank first, second, third.

Group Method: The Group Method is a method of evaluating entries or exhibits in a particular class or contest according to the standards developed for that class or contest. The entries, exhibits, or contestants are evaluated and arranged into groups for recognition of their achievement based upon how close the exhibit meets the pre-established standards. In some cases, the Danish or Modified Danish System may be referred to as Group Method.

In the Danish, Modified Danish, and Group Method Systems the following groupings are generally used:

Excellent or Blue: A blue is given to those entries or members who most nearly meet the standards established for the particular class or level of performance. Excellent does not indicate perfection, but is a wide grouping indicating a high degree of achievement toward the elements in the standards for the exhibit.

Good or Red: The second or red grouping indicates those exhibits or individuals who rank good in relation to the particular standards or expected achievement of the class or contest. Either the general level of the accomplishment is less than excellent or enough specific shortcomings are found to cause the placing to drop from excellent to good.

Fair or White: The white grouping contains those exhibits or contestants who upon evaluation are found lacking and rate only average, acceptable, or satisfactory rating for the standards established. These exhibits have great room for improvement.

No Award or No Ribbon: May be given if exhibits or individuals who for one reason or another fail to produce that level of achievement which can be reasonably expected in relation to the specific class or performance in which they are entered.





Expectations for Fair & Extension Staff

- Make at least 3 contacts with the judge: invitation to judge, sending the fair list/fair book and other information (entry tickets, parking passes, etc), and briefing the judge before evaluation begins.
- Notify the judge of dates, time to arrive, what to judge, how judging is done, what age groupings and placings are used, and what's expected for state fair exhibits.
- Be specific about compensation, if any -- how much and what's included.
- Have supplies and materials on hand. Furnish adequate tools and/or equipment for judges to use (e.g., sharp knife, cutting board, etc.)
- Have enough staff/volunteer help for each judge.
- Communicate expectations and specific responsibilities of judges.
- Indicate who the judge should contact for help/questions/support.
- Communicate philosophy about awards, ribbon quotas and traditions in the county.
- Determine eligibility and/or appropriate classes for exhibits if questions arise.
- Provide judges a comfortable space in which to work, and a space to communicate freely about items being judged without parents, leaders or members present.
- Maintain open communication. Don't be afraid to admit making a mistake.
- Be fair and consistent with judges. Smile!
- Give judges freedom to consult or share with others if necessary. They can't know everything.
- Upon arrival at exhibit hall, indicate what each judge will be judging. Exhibits should be ready, organized in various sections as needed, with score sheets ready, exhibit tags with pertinent information (exhibitor names should not be visible during judging), pencils and any other items needed.

- Inform judges of expectations and any quotas for state fair.
- Allow the same judges to judge all of the same type articles in a category to maintain consistency in judging.



Expectations for Judges

- ✓ Let staff know you're interested, available, and any preferences for age level or subject matter you may have. If you're new in the area, knowing previous experience and who you've worked with is helpful, too.
- ✓ Respond promptly when asked to judge. If you aren't available, staff appreciate your suggestions of other judges.
- ✓ Read all material provided in advance. Become familiar with the general philosophy of 4-H judging, and with project standards – refer to specific entry category guidelines in the local fair book.
- ✓ Attend judges' training, if offered.
- ✓ Communicate with staff, in advance, if you have any questions or problems, or if you need clarification.
- ✓ Utilize superintendents and/or helpers at the fair as questions or problems arise.
- ✓ Be assertive enough to handle difficult situations, if necessary.
- ✓ Arrive on time for judging, with materials provided in advance. Arrive in time to visit with persons in charge. Get acquainted with the facilities and relax for a few minutes before your first class of exhibits or group of contestants.
- ✓ Be friendly and courteous.
- ✓ If you'll be interview judging, be sure to involve the member (see attached guidelines). Identify both good points and those areas which need improvement. Offer suggestions for further improvement and exploration of the subject. Avoid absolute criticisms. Please avoid using the phrase, "You would have had a blue if..." If you're new to interview judging, refer to the attached sample questions.

- ✓ Consider each youth individually. Encourage member evaluation of his/her own work. Make constructive comments so the member will know how to improve next time.
- ✓ If you're qualified, help other judges if necessary.
- ✓ Keep state fair exhibits in mind throughout the judging, so selection can be more easily done at the end.
- ✓ Stay until judging is over and state fair selections have been made. Be sure state fair selections meet class criteria.
- ✓ Check with staff before you leave. Turn in mileage, bills, hours, etc. promptly. If mileage is reimbursed, we encourage you to carpool with other judges as feasible, recognizing that the fair and the 4-H organization are both non-profits.
- ✓ After the fair, take time to give staff feedback on improvements for the next year. It's nice to hear when things go well, too!
- ✓ Develop a procedure for examining each exhibit and/or contestant so that important items will not be overlooked.
- ✓ Make your decisions quickly and firmly. Keep things moving. Take time, however, to examine each entry even though your first glance indicates that it belongs toward the bottom of the class.
- ✓ Competition should be judged in accordance with established criteria, and appropriate feedback and comments should be provided to each participant. Comments should be constructively focused for the purpose of the participant's improvement.
- ✓ Written comments provide the member with some understanding of what was done well and what improvements can be made and how. Comments are to be stated positively and constructively and should inspire the member to continue to learn and to improve.



Judging Tips

- ▶ Keep in mind that the whole product is more important than its parts. Projects are a means to an end - not an end in themselves.
- ▶ Recognize the possibility that some exhibits travel great distances by various means before they are judged.
- ▶ When judging static 4-H exhibits, try to visualize the age and experience level and resources available to the exhibitors. Remember they will each have had different learning opportunities. Judging is done according to quality standards and is not a matter of personal taste or preferences.
- ▶ Make the judging experience as educational as possible. Fill out the comment sheets carefully and include as many suggestions as possible. Use plenty of positive comments. Make sure suggestions are stated in a positive way and help the 4-Her identify ways to improve.
- ▶ Take a look at the total class or lot before making any decisions. Don't give top placings if exhibits are not worthy.
- ▶ Be consistent.
- ▶ Be ready to explain placings.
- ▶ Be sure to review the recorded results before you leave. In some county fairs, the superintendent may provide the sheets that need to be signed before you leave.



References

- 4-H Judges Guide*, Oregon State University
- The Danish or Group Method of Judging*, Washington State University
- 2002 State Fair Judging*, University of South Dakota
- Judge's Manual*, Utah State University
- A Judge's Thoughts for a Successful 4-H Judging Experience*, University of Minnesota
- 4-H Project Evaluation and Fair Judging*, University of Idaho