

2026 Livestock Skillathon

The Livestock Skillathon is a competitive event that allows youth to test their knowledge of the livestock industry. This contest will include two phases. In Phase 1, each participant will complete a written knowledge test with multiple-choice questions about different topics within the livestock industry. This phase will also include problem-solving scenarios with multiple-choice questions. In Phase 2, each participant will complete a series of identification stations. Both phases will focus on cumulative knowledge of the five livestock species shown at CYAE: dairy cattle, beef cattle, swine, sheep, and meat goats.

The Livestock Skillathon contest is open to all CYAE participants.

This contest serves as the livestock skillathon state qualifier contest for California 4-H.

The top-placing Senior 4-H participants (14-18 years old) will qualify to represent California 4-H at the National 4-H Livestock Skillathon Competition during the North American International Livestock Exposition (NAILE) in Louisville, KY. This contest will be held on November 17, 2025. 4-H youth must be in good standing to be eligible to qualify.

Scoring: All responses will be recorded on a Scantron sheet for scoring. Each participant will receive a combined score for both phases of the contest.

Awards: An award will be given to the top-placing exhibitors in each division of the Skillathon. Topplacing 4-H participants will be recognized and receive individual awards as well.

SKILLATHON OVERVIEW:

The following is a list of common Livestock Skillathon tests. Please note that actual tests may deviate from this list to keep current with a rapidly changing livestock industry.

All contest components include different versions for Junior and Intermediate/Senior participants.

PHASE 1 - Topics to Review for Knowledge Test AND Problem-Solving Scenarios:

General Knowledge: Average temperatures of each species, names of genders of each specie.

Biosecurity: Indirect transmission of a pathogen, direct transmission of a pathogen

Animal Health: Common diseases and in which species/sex they occur, common causes of diseases and symptoms, diseases commonly found in the U.S., proper age for vaccinations, what causes common illnesses.

Breeds: Maternal breed characteristics and origins, Latin terms for each specie, appearance characteristics, what the breed is known for (i.e., which breed is known for producing a heavy muscled carcass?), maternal breed characteristics, performance traits.

Nutrition: Feedstuffs and classes of nutrients, common feed rations, minerals found in common feeds, characteristics of wheat millings, what are feed by-products, what should be restricted in certain specie diets.

Animal Reproduction: Gestation periods, reproductive anatomy, understand the purpose for common reproductive management techniques such as artificial insemination or use of CIDRs. Carcass Traits: What determines yield grade, what determines quality grade, what is marbling, from what part of the body do certain meat cuts come.

Potential Problem-Solving Topic Areas

Quality Assurance: Demonstrate how to read an animal health product label, calculate dosage rates and withdrawal times, be familiar with administration routes, animal identification, and restraint methods, and make responsible management decisions regarding quality assurance.

Animal Breeding – Selection Scenario: Evaluate a breeding animal scenario and make animal selection decisions based upon performance data and visual appraisal to rank breeding animals for use within the situation.

Livestock Feeding Scenario: Evaluate feed labels, interpret information, and apply to answer questions for a livestock feeding scenario.

PHASE 2 – Review for Identification Stations:

Livestock Equipment Identification: Identify the proper name and purpose for pieces of equipment used in livestock production.

Livestock Breed Identification: Identify livestock breeds (beef cattle, dairy cattle, swine, sheep, and non-dairy goats) from pictures. Participants may also be required to match the breed with the most appropriate description supplied for each breed.

Retail Meat Cut Identification: Identify beef, lamb, and pork retail cuts from the National 4-H Meat Judging Retail ID List. Participants will identify the retail cut species, primal cut, and retail cut name.

Feed Sample Identification and Hay Evaluation: Identify major livestock feed ingredients including different grains and hays. Participants may also be asked to identify nutrient category and major composition information. Feed samples and lists of feed names and nutrient groups will be provided.

Reproduction: Identify reproductive tract organs and functions and/or reproductive management equipment for livestock species.

CONTEST GUIDELINES:

1. Participants should report to the contest officials located in the Corteva building testing area to check-in between 3:30-4pm on July 31, 2025. Upon check-in, participants will receive a scantron sheet and directions to fill out their information. Once checked-in, participants will be asked to wait at the tables for the start of the testing period.
2. Participants are encouraged to bring a clipboard, pencil, and eraser. Extra pencils and erasers will be available. The participants may bring no books, notes, pamphlets, or other reference material into the contest area. All electronic communication devices of any kind are prohibited. Calculators will be provided when needed.
3. Participants are not to pick up or touch any item that is being identified or evaluated, unless otherwise directed by contest officials.
4. The contest will be divided into two phases as described above.
5. Participants will be allowed to rotate through the phases at their own pace. Rotations may be restricted or modified only to manage crowding at the identification stations.
6. During the competition, there will be no conferring between participants or between a participant and anyone else except as directed by contest officials. Any participant observed to be conferring without permission will be removed from the contest.
7. After the completion of the contest, Scantron sheets must be turned in to contest officials for scoring. Results will be made available on JudgingCard.com.