

**Policies and Guidelines  
For  
National 4-H Competitive Events**  
(with April 2002 revisions effective immediately, with the exception that youth attending competitive events held in conjunction with the National Western in 2003 are subject to the previous age eligibility until 2004)  
(Additions are **Highlighted**.)

**Situation and Background**

Competitive events are one of a number of important educational methods in 4-H Youth Development education. For example, participation in such events helps 4-H'ers to make and defend decisions, speak publicly, gain knowledge and skills in subject matter, and learn to deal with competitive situations. Events also promote learning about diversity, as young people from across the nation interact.

**Purpose and Objectives:**

This paper defines the policies and guidelines under which national 4-H competitive events are to be conducted. It also establishes a set of operational procedures that Contest Management Committees are encouraged to use in planning and conducting the event. A State may establish rules different from those contained herein for State competitive events, but entries from that State entering national competitive events **MUST CONFORM** to those contained herein.

These policies and guidelines do not apply to regional events, except those designated Eastern National and Western National, but the regional Management Committees are encouraged to establish similar policies and guidelines for their regional 4-H events.

**Definitions:**

1. *4-H Competitive Events: A 4-H competitive event is one in which 4-H members compete individually or as teams for recognition and which use 4-H in the name of the event and/or the 4-H name and emblem in promoting the event. The term "event" is used to apply to 4-H divisions or classes of other events as well as to an event which is exclusively 4-H. 4-H competitive events include judging contests, demonstration contests, exhibits, and other performance events open exclusively to 4-H members.*
2. *National 4-H Competitive Event: A National 4-H Competitive Event meets the following criteria:*
  - a. A National 4-H competitive event is defined as any nationwide or multiregional event regardless of title.
  - b. Sponsored and/or controlled by the Cooperative Extension System.
  - c. Open to participation by 4-H members from all States/territories/District of Columbia.
  - d. Eastern and Western Divisions of a particular National Event are permissible. Only one such event may be conducted on each side of the Mississippi River in each

program area. When this occurs, the names will be designated “Eastern-National” and “Western-National.” If only one contest is conducted, it will simply be called “National.” When a State makes a selection to attend a particular divisional event of a national competitive event, that division should be used in the future. If a State decides to change which divisional it will attend, the Contest Management Committee of both events are to be notified of the decision by April 1 of the current year.

- e. Approved by the Deputy Administrator, Families, 4-H and Nutrition, Cooperative State Research, Education and Extension Service, USDA, and the National 4-H Leadership Trust.

1. *Regional 4-H Competitive Event: A regional 4-H competitive event meets the following criteria:*

- a. *Sponsored and/or controlled by Cooperative Extension System.*
- b. *Open to participation by 4-H members from each State/territory/District of Columbia in the Extension Region in which it is held, but participation by 4-H members from States/territories/District of Columbia outside the region may be invited.*
- c. *Approved by the Extension Directors in the region in which the event is located.*
- d. *If the competitive event is open to 4-H members beyond the state or region authorizing the event, the event must conform to the national rules listed below.*

*(Approved by Deputy Administrator F4-HN/CSREES and the National 4-H Leadership Trust February 21, 2002.)*

4. *Invitational 4-H Competitive Event: An invitational 4-H competitive event meets the following criteria:*

- a. *Sponsored and/or controlled by the Cooperative Extension System.*
- b. *An event held primarily for 4-H members from one State/territory/District of Columbia in which members from other States/territories/District of Columbia are invited to participate.*
- c. *Approved by the Extension Director in the State/territory/District of Columbia in which the event is located.*
- d. *If the competitive event is open to 4-H members beyond the state or region authorizing the event, the event must conform to the national rules listed below.*

*(Approved by Deputy Administrator F4-HN/CSREES and the National 4-H Leadership Trust February 21, 2002.)*

### **National 4-H Competitive Event Rules:**

1. A State/territory/District of Columbia is allowed only one entry in only one division of a contest in a national 4-H competitive event each year. An entry is an individual, in the events where individuals compete against individuals only, or a team in events where total team scores are computed and recognition given to the team. Individuals may be recognized in those events that are primarily team events.
2. Entries not officially entered will not be permitted to participate for any reason.

3. An individual may enter a National 4-H competitive event in a specific program area only once. Participating members of a team entry (even if they are designated alternate by low score) are ineligible to enter the same event again as a part of another team.
4. The eligibility requirements to enter a National 4-H Competitive Event are:
  - a. Contestant must already have passed his or her 14<sup>th</sup> birthday, and may not have reached his or her 19<sup>th</sup> birthday as of January 1 of the year in which the National 4-H Competitive Event is held. However, the State 4-H Leader may grant a special authorization to compete, for youth with developmental disabilities who exceed the upper age limit.

*(Approved by Deputy Administrator F4-HN/CSREES and the National 4-H Leadership Trust April 23, 2002)*

- b. All contestants must be members of 4-H in the state they are representing during the year in which the National 4-H Competitive Event is held.
- c. The contestant(s) or team(s) of contestants must be certified as the official state entry by the State 4-H Leader or by a person designated by the State 4-H Leader. The individual(s) or team(s) may be selected by any procedure the State 4-H Leader believes is appropriate.
- d. The contestant, his or her county 4-H staff member, and the State 4-H Leader must certify as follows on the application form **or an accompanying memo:**

“This contestant has not participated in post-secondary coursework in the subject area of the national 4-H competition, nor has he or she participated in training for post-secondary competition in the subject area of the national 4-H competition.”

Violation of the above will result in forfeiture of any awards or recognition which have been won in the National 4-H Competitive Event.

#### **National Policy re: Medical/Accident Insurance**

"Each state or territory will provide medical/accident coverage for all its 4-H teams participating in all 4-H events, as well as medical/accident coverage during travel to and from the events." (This includes out-of-state events sponsored by others, such as the National Land Judging and Junior Horticulture contests.)

Approved by Deputy Administrator, CSREES, and the National 4-H Leadership Council,  
May 25, 2000

## **Competing in Both 4-H & FFA National Events**

The National offices of 4-H and FFA have agreed on the following national policy, in the interest of consistency between events and between organizations in eligibility for national competition.

"Participation by the same individual in both a National 4-H and a National FFA competitive event in the same year may occur only when the following is and organization.

- 2) Assure that each individual is given all the opportunities he or she has legitimately earned.
- 3) Assure that the policy is easy for participants and states to understand.
- 4) Assure that the policy does not require extra efforts from the Management Committee to enforce.
- 5) Assure that the national offices of 4-H and FFA are supportive of each other, and consistent in their interpretation of eligibility.

We ask that each event conform to this policy beginning in the year 2000.

ALMA C. HOBBS  
Deputy Administrator  
March, 1999

LARRY CASE  
National FFA Advisor

## **Approval as a National 4-H Competitive Event:**

The following are currently approved as National 4-H Competitive Events:

“National” events are those that have at least one third of the eligible States participating, and have been approved under these Guidelines by the Deputy Administrator, Families, 4-H and Nutrition, CSREES/USDA and the National 4-H Leadership Trust.

*(Approved by the Deputy Administrator, F4-HN/CSREES and the National 4-H Leadership Trust February 21, 2002)*

“Invitational” events are those which may have any number of States participating and only need the approval of the Extension Director where the event is held. See definitions on pages 1 and 2.

National 4-H Livestock Judging Contest, Louisville, Kentucky  
National 4-H Dairy Cattle Judging Contest, Madison, Wisconsin  
National 4-H Poultry and Egg Conference, Louisville, Kentucky  
Eastern-National 4-H Horse Roundup, Louisville, Kentucky  
Western-National 4-H Horse Classic, Denver, Colorado

**National 4-H Engineering, Science, and Leadership Event, West Lafayette,**

### **Indiana**

National 4-H Forestry Invitational, Jackson’s Mill, West Virginia  
National 4-H Meats Judging and Identification Contest, Manhattan, Kansas  
National 4-H Wildlife Habitat Evaluation Invitational, Alta, Wyoming (2001)

Another that may be nationwide in scope but carries the designation “Invitational”:

Invitational 4-H Dairy Bowl Contest, Louisville, Kentucky

Any proposed event, including Eastern and Western divisions, must receive approval for the national designation. Approval is granted by the Deputy Administrator, Families, 4-H and Nutrition, CSREES/USDA and the National 4-H Leadership Trust. Only approved events may use the name and emblem of 4-H, or be called “National 4-H.” The proposed event must follow the guidelines in this document and the committee should submit a proposal that outlines the following:

1. A demonstrated need for the event in support of an ongoing educational program conducted by the Cooperative Extension System. An indication of interest and intent to participate must be shown by an adequate number of States/territories/District of Columbia to justify the staff time required. Participation of one-third of the states/territories/District of Columbia who are in the area of an event (see 2d on preceding page) are required for approval or for re-approval of an event.
2. Facilities available for use including headquarters hotel and/or housing arrangements.
3. Explanation of how “Host Responsibilities’ will be met. (See Operational Procedures.)
4. Proposed budget (including financial support available) the system to be used to secure donor support, and a system (location) for handling funds.
5. Availability of classes, materials and/or equipment for holding the event.
6. Proposed content of the event. (Classes, activities, etc.)
7. Proposed organization of the contest management staff to operate the event, including the name of the initial chairman of the committee and the initial superintendent(s).
8. Suggested rules of the contest, which may not violate the general rules contained herein.
9. Suggested membership of the contest management committee along with suggested terms of office. (See guidelines for committee.)

Approval of all events is limited to five years; re-approval each five years is required. For an event to be approved or re-approved as a “National,” there must be evidence of participation or intent to participate by at least 1/3 of the eligible states/territories/District of Columbia. Nineteen States participating are required for those events that are nationwide in scope. Only nine states are required for those divisional (Eastern and Western) events. The Deputy Administrator and National 4-H Leadership Trust may waiver this requirement

under certain circumstances. An extension may be made for a one-year approval on an annual basis.

### **Guidelines for Committees:**

The following are guidelines for organization, appointment, and operation of Contest Management Committees:

1. The Contest Management Committee is responsible for the overall management and operation of the competitive event.
2. The Contest Management Committee must be made up of at least 50 percent Extension salaried staff, either in the subject matter area of the contest or in 4-H. Other members of the committee may be business or industrial representatives and/or other university personnel. Beginning in 2002 At least two members of the Management Committee should be 4-H youth volunteers, and Management Committees are encouraged to include adult 4-H volunteers as well. National 4-H Council may or may not choose to name a staff member to the committee.-The Contest Superintendent(s) should be members of the committee.
3. A brief statement of qualifications of all proposed committee members must be included in the proposal. It is desirable that committee members have experience with youth development education.
4. The term of office for committee members should be for three years, except for the first committee. One-third of the terms of the first committee should be for three years, one-third for two years, and one-third for one year so that there will be continuity. Members may be re-appointed.
5. Recommendations for Contest Management Committee members to serve, including the chairperson and superintendent(s) will be made by the proposing group to the Deputy Administrator, F4-HN, CSREES, USDA, who will seek approval (if needed) of the respective Extension Director or from the person's employing organization-
6. The Deputy Administrator, F4-HN, CSREES, USDA will appoint an F4-HN staff member to serve as liaison between the Contest Management Committee and F4-HN, CSREES, USDA.
7. The term of office for the superintendent(s) will be one to three years at the discretion of the contest management committee. He/she may be re-appointed.
8. The Contest Management Committee will be responsible for establishing and updating rules. The initial draft of the rules and any major changes, such as adding classes or contests which will involve additional contestants or changing location of the contests, will be referred to the Deputy Administrator, F4-HN, CSREES, USDA. If Eastern and Western divisions exist, the superintendents and contest committee

chairs, through the CSREES liaison, must coordinate classes, awards, budgets, etc. in order to provide similar experiences for youth.

9. The Contest Management Committee will serve as the appeals committee and receive recommendations for procedural changes.
10. The committee will establish a system (individual or sub-committee) to solicit the private sector for funds and awards for the event.
11. The chairman of the Contest Management Committee will be responsible for submitting a written report to the Deputy Administrator, F4-HN, CSREES, USDA, which should include participation statistics, evaluation, financial accounting, and documentation for donor accountability, and recommendations for future events. Results of the contest should be given to each team at the contest, and shared with the states.

### **Operational Procedures:**

#### 1. Host Responsibilities:

Host contact should be arranged and agreements secured for needed services. Hosts are defined as representatives of sponsoring agencies or organizations, e.g., World Dairy Expo, North American Livestock Expo, the Cooperative Extension Service staff of the State where the event will be held and/or and agreed upon Contest Management Committee that has a rotating membership. Responsibilities and services that may need attention by hosts are:

- Staff to operate the event
- Operational arrangements
- Printing
- Housing, Meals and Hotel Contact
- Tabulation and Scoring
- Computer Services
- Informational Services

#### 2. Planning and Time Table

The Management Committee should be in attendance at the event to evaluate the current event and make plans for future events. Dates and location of future events should be announced at that time. If dates cannot be confirmed, tentative dates must be announced. Changes in contest composition (new or different classes) rules and regulations, and budgets should be considered at this meeting. Final decisions may be made by correspondence or conference calls. Liaison between dual events (East and West Divisions) must be made. Problems of agreement between the two Contest Management Committees will be resolved by negotiation with the two groups and the CSREES liaison. Detailed planning should be underway at least eleven months in advance of the event. Basic rules and regulations should be announced eleven months in advance of the event. The final program should be sent to the States at least six months prior to the event.

#### 3. Budget

As with all public moneys, every one involved in handling funds for 4-H events should insure that the funds are in a qualified management organization (such as a State 4-H Foundation, a show organization like North American Livestock Expo or World Dairy

Expo, or the National 4-H Council's 4-H Activity Foundation. The accounting procedures must be reviewed annually. An event's operating budget must be developed for committee members ~~and an informational copy shared with CSREES~~, eleven months in advance of the event. Any changes of the location of funds or the organizational servicing of the budget, e.g., State 4-H Foundation, or 501(c)3 organization should be indicated at this time. Additionally, the budget should include a potential donor list and an indication of the individuals who will solicit funds and awards.

4. Information Services

The Contest Management Committee must plan for information service needs of the event as follows:

- Photographic coverage for press and donor reports
- Photographic service to State teams and groups
- Take home news releases for participants
- Local media coverage
- Industry media coverage

Many of the sponsoring organizations, such as World Dairy Expo and North American Livestock Exposition, have Information/Communication Staff that can assist with this requirement.

5. Donor Visibility and Accountability

To assure continued support, the Contest Management Committee must provide the following:

- Invitation to each donor to have a representative participate in the event
- A list of all donors with addresses to each participant and adult
- Donor recognition in the program, advanced materials, media releases, and scripts
- Follow-up letters or reports to each donor documenting the event

6. Reporting and Accountability

A copy of the summary of the results of the contest should be available to each team at the close of the event. In addition, a copy of the summary of the results of the contest must be sent to the Deputy Administrator, F4-HN, CSREES, USDA within seven days of the event. A summary of the budget (income and expenses) as well as a summary of the visibility given to donors and participants should be available to F4-HN within thirty days.

7. Timetable Summary

- 12 months prior . . . . .Announce date and location
- 11 months prior . . . . .Detailed planning underway, rules and regulations to state and budget development
- 6 months prior . . . . . Final program and operational details to States and F4-HN, CSREES.
- 7 days after . . . . .Summary of results of the contest to F4-HN and States
- 30 days after . . . . .Summary of budget and visibility to F4-HN

Initially Approved by ECOP, 1978

Revision Approved by ECOP, 1983

Revision Approved by ECOP, 1984

Revision Approved by ECOP, 1985

Revision Approved by ES/USDA, 1990

Revision Approved by CSREES/USDA and National FFA Advisor, 1999

Revision Approved by CSREES/USDA and National 4-H Leadership Council, May 2000

Revision Approved by CSREES/USDA and National 4-H Leadership Trust, May 2001

Revision Approved by CSREES/USDA and National 4-H Leadership Trust, April 2002

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4/16/02