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University of Kentucky
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4-H LIVESTOCK PROJECTS

THIS WEEK'S ARTICLE WAS WRITTEN BY ONE OF OUR 4-H AGENTS, STACEY POTTS

Youth livestock projects are very popular with 4-H'ers. They are a great family activity and a very useful tool for teaching life skills and good agricultural practices to young people. Responsibility, budgeting, recordkeeping, and loan management are among the lessons learned. One misconception people often have about livestock projects is that you have to operate a livestock farm to participate. Although it is true that you do need property on which to keep your animal, the acreage would depend on what type of livestock you are interested in. The barns and fences you have on your property might also determine the appropriate project.

Regardless of the species, participating in a youth livestock project can provide a very rewarding experience for your child. Late winter and early spring are the organizational periods. Following is information about some of the livestock projects available to youth in Daviess County. Youth ages 9 – 19 are eligible to participate, younger youth are eligible for some of the smaller animal projects. All livestock project participants are required to attend educational club meetings organized by Certified 4-H Volunteer Leaders.

Thirty-three youth from Daviess County participated in the 4-H/FFA Feeder Calf Project last year. In March, participants purchase a feeder calf which they draw from a pool of calves.

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Youth also have the option of providing their own calf so long as it meets program requirements. The participants are then responsible for the care and feeding of that calf until they are sold in the August CPH sale. If the youth has chosen a heifer, they have the option of keeping it to start building their own herd. Prior to and throughout the project, youth attend educational sessions to learn more about caring for and handling their animal. Weigh-ins are held at least twice during the project to make sure cattle are gaining weight appropriately. Youth also have the opportunity to exhibit their animal in a special feeder calf class during the county fair. A requirement of the program is keeping detailed records involving feeding, health care, and rate of gain. At the end of the project, winners are determined based on their record book, foot evaluation at the fair, and added value. This project is unique to Daviess County and is overseen by a project committee that views it as an alternative to the traditional youth cattle project, show or club calves. While both projects do a great job of introducing youth to the cattle industry, the feeder calf project focuses less on showing. The Farm Service Agency has been a partner in this project by providing low interest loans to participants. Registration will be due March 16 along with a \$50 deposit on calves.

Other 4-H projects in Daviess County include club or market steers, heifers, bulls, sheep, dairy goats, and pigs. If you think your family isn't ready for cattle, or you don't have the facilities, sheep, goats, or pigs may be the perfect alternative. Sheep and goat projects allow children younger than nine to participate in their own division. Sheep and goats are good choices for these youth since they are smaller and easier to handle.

If you think your family may be interested, it is time to get started. Most livestock projects have very specific ownership and tagging requirements. Club or market steers, sheep,

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goats, and state fair pigs have to meet specific ownership requirements, must be tagged through the Kentucky Uniform Identification Program, and have a DNA sample pulled. This must take place at an approved location. For steers, this has to occur before March 31; for sheep, goats, and state fair pigs, the deadline is May 31. County Fair pigs must be tagged by May 31. To provide more information about youth livestock projects, Daviess County 4-H will host a 4-H Livestock Information program on Thursday, March 16 at 6:30 p.m. at the Daviess County Extension Office. Or contact Stacey Potts, 4-H/Youth Development Agent, at 270-685-8480.

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