

Date: January 30, 2026

To: All 4-H Beef/Dairy Beef Market, and Dairy Feeder Steer Project Members and Leaders

From: Kayla Mitchell, Program Coordinator - 4-H Youth Development

Re: 2026 Beef Project Information and Updates

This is a quick update on the events that will take place for the 2026 fair season within the beef department. Should you have questions, please feel free to contact the MSU Extension office at 269-467-5511. **Please note that the information contained in this letter is subject to change.**

NEW for 2026:

• Beef Feeder Steer Class:

- Calves must be weighed, tagged, and vaccinated on June 2 or 4 from 5:00-7:00 p.m. at the fairgrounds
- Calves must be castrated and dehorned at the June weigh-in
- Vaccination program will be the same as dairy feeder steers
- Calves must weigh 175-400lbs. in June. Calves must gain 1.75 lbs. per day from the June weigh-in to the fair. There is no maximum weight at fair.
- Calves must be weaned at least two weeks prior to fair check-in
- Exhibitors are allowed to show both a beef feeder steer and a beef market steer/heifer at fair. The market animal will be required to sell in the auction.
 - If exhibiting both, the beef feeder will not go through the auction unless it was Grand or Reserve Grand Champion.
- Exhibitors who only show a beef feeder steer are eligible to go through the large animal auction, but may also withdraw their calf to take home.
 - The animal removal authorization form must be filled out by 8:00 p.m. Tuesday, September 22.
- Grand and Reserve Grand Champion beef feeder steers must sell in the auction

• Evaluations: members exhibiting both breeding stock and market animals will only be required to do ONE beef evaluation.

- The St. Joseph County Grange Fair will **NOT** require loadout to be done by 11:00 a.m. on Sunday, September 27. There will not be fireworks or rides operating that day.
 - ALL YOUTH are still expected to be at barn clean up at 5:30 a.m. on Sunday to tear down gates and clean specie barns.

Reminders:

- **Market Beef and Dairy Beef Weigh-In and Tagging:** All market steers, market heifers, dairy market steers, and carcass beef animals must be tagged on **Saturday, March 21**, from 9:00 - 10:00 a.m. at the fairgrounds. **Note:** scales will be available for optional weigh-in.
- Beef breeding stock **may be leased**. The 4-H Cattle Lease/Borrow Program form must be filled out and turned in with all appropriate attachments to the MSU Extension office by **August 1, 2026**. All owned **breeding stock** animals must be registered at the MSU Extension office via FairEntry by August 15.



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- **Feeder Calf Tagging:** Countywide tagging and weigh-in dates will be **Tuesday, June 2, or Thursday, June 4**, at the St. Joseph County Fairgrounds, 5:00 - 7:00 p.m. All feeder steers must be castrated and dehorned by countywide weigh-in. Calves that are not registered on either of these dates are not eligible to be shown at fair.
 - Dairy feeder steers must weigh between **175-325 lbs.**
 - Beef feeder steers must weigh between **175-400 lbs.**
- **Family Tagging:** Beef exhibitors may participate in “family” tagging. Each family member must indicate on their registration form if they are participating in “family” tagging.
- **Ownership of beef animals:** Each 4-H member must remain in possession of their market beef/dairy beef animals after tagging and must house their animal(s) within a 25-mile radius of the member's home address. If an animal is determined to be housed over a 25-mile radius of the member's home address and is in violation determined by the Beef Superintendent or by MSU Extension staff, that animal will be disqualified for exhibition at the St. Joseph County Grange Fair.
- **County Bred and Raised forms** are due to the MSU Extension office by 4:00 p.m. on April 15.
- **Live carcass** weigh-in will be **Saturday, September 12, 2026**, from 10:00 - 11:00 a.m.
 - Carcass animals **MUST** be broke to lead or will be disqualified at the discretion of the Beef Superintendent and/or MSU Extension staff.
 - If a beef market animal is disqualified from the carcass contest, the member may request the animal to be shipped with other entries for butchering; the member will be responsible for all expenses of processing, and the animal will not be entered into the carcass contest.
- **Beef Carcass hanging evaluation contest** will be the week of September 14, 2026, at Bontrager's Custom Meat Processing in Leonidas, actual date and time to be determined.
 - Exhibitors are **required to attend** the hanging evaluation unless prior approval is granted by the 4-H Program Coordinator. No-shows will result in disqualification.
- **Fair check-in** will be Friday, September 18, 5:00-7:00 p.m., and Saturday, September 19, 8:00-11:00 a.m. at the beef barn for all beef animals.
 - This includes market beef, dairy market beef, all feeder steers, and beef breeding stock.
- **Evaluations:** All market livestock exhibitors are required to complete an evaluation for each species they exhibit. These will take place on **Sunday, September 19, 2026**, starting at 2:00 p.m.
- **Dress code for Interview and Show:** Long pants (no holes, rips, or tears), Collared dress shirt or long sleeve shirt. NO Sleeveless shirts. Leather shoes/boots.
- Dairy Market Steers and Dairy Feeder Steers **must** be a purebred or crossbred animal of the following breeds: Holstein, Jersey, Brown Swiss, Ayrshire, Guernsey, Lineback, and Dutch Belt.
 - Any steers crossbred with a breed other than those listed will be exhibited in the beef equivalent class.
- **Order of Show:**
 - *Beef/Dairy Beef Market Animals & Beef Breeding Stock Show:* Fitting & Showmanship (oldest to youngest age group), Dairy Market Steers, Market Steers (lightest to heaviest classes), Market Heifer, County Bred & Raised, Grand Drive, Breeding Stock
 - *Feeder Show:* Fitting & Showmanship (oldest to youngest age group, including Cloverbuds), Dairy Feeder Steers (lightest to heaviest classes), Dairy Feeder Grand Drive, Beef Feeder Steers (lightest to heaviest classes), Beef Feeder Grand Drive
 - Anyone is allowed to prepare animals for show. However, it is expected that the youth exhibitor **will actively participate** in the grooming of their project animal.
- **All 4-H livestock members/clubs** will be held responsible for setting up their project pen/stall and decorations before fair, as well as cleaning and tearing down their project pen/stall at the end of fair. Individuals or clubs may be assessed a \$50.00 fine for failure to do so.
- Cattle may be **loaded out** on Saturday, September 26, from 11:00 p.m. to midnight or Sunday, September 27, at 5:30 a.m.

Electronic Identification (EID) Tags

1. All cattle moving to a show, sale, or exhibition are required to have an official radio frequency identification device (RFID) ear tag. Michigan resident exhibitors may call CentralStar Cooperative at 1-888-203-3398 to order RFID tags at a cost of \$2.90 per tag.
2. All out-of-state cattle exhibited in Michigan shall be tagged with an official radio frequency identification device (RFID) ear tag. For residents outside of Michigan, tags can be ordered by calling Rise' with RJ Matthews Co. at 330-834-3000. It is taking 4-6 weeks to receive tags.
3. All cattle purchased in the State of Michigan, by law, must have an EID tag.

General Rules of Interest

1. Five different types of 4-H market cattle can be exhibited in 4-H classes at the St. Joseph County Grange Fair: *beef market steers, beef market heifers, beef feeder steers, dairy market steers, and dairy feeder steers*. A given member may register all five types of market cattle with the MSU Extension office by the due date, but may only show two at the fair: a dairy market steer and a dairy feeder steer *or* a beef market steer/heifer and a beef feeder steer.
 - a. If a member brings **both** a market animal and a feeder steer to the fair, **only the market animal may be used for showmanship** and will be the *only* animal sold at auction.
 - b. If exhibiting both, the feeder steer will not go through the auction unless it was Grand or Reserve Grand Champion.
2. **Dehorning:** All **market and breeding stock cattle** must be clean-polled/dehorned with an allowance of 1 ½" regrowth at fair to be exhibited in 4-H classes at the fair.
3. Beef/dairy beef/feeder steers with physical defects (i.e. ruptured navel, abscess, etc.) will be ineligible for exhibition in 4-H, FFA, & Other Youth classes at the fair.
4. Feed and water buckets/pans must be removed from the stall as soon as the animal has finished eating/drinking. Stalls must be cleaned daily (removing wet and manured bedding) during morning chores and spot cleaned throughout the day. The 4-H member is responsible for monitoring when the animal is done eating/drinking and removing buckets/pans accordingly, as well as cleaning the stall(s). Failure to follow these rules may lead to "yellow/red tagging" of the exhibit. If a member receives two yellow tags and one red tag, their project animal will be sent home, and all awards/premiums relating to that animal will be revoked. (See "yellow/red tag" rule in the St. Joseph County 4-H Fair book).
5. All beef project exhibitors are required to compete in Fitting & Showmanship classes.

Important Dates and Deadlines for the Beef Animal/Dairy Market Steer and Feeder Calf Projects

Activity or Event	Date(s) or Deadline	Special Information
Market Beef Tagging/Registration	Saturday, March 21, 9:00 - 10:00 a.m.	
County Bred and Raised Forms Due	April 15, 4:00 p.m. to the MSU Extension office	
Feeder Steer Tagging/Registration	Tuesday, June 2, 5:00 - 7:00 p.m. or Thursday, June 4, 5:00 - 7:00 p.m.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Members can participate in “family” tagging, i.e. two siblings would have access to up to four animals. • If participating in “family” tagging, it must be noted on <u>ALL</u> participating family members.
Leasing Paperwork Due	August 1, 4:00 p.m.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Due to the MSU Extension office by close of business
Fair Registration Deadline	August 15, 4:00 p.m.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completed online in FairEntry
Live Carcass Weigh-in	September 12, 10:00 - 11:00 a.m.	Fairgrounds Hanging evaluation TBD
Fair Weigh-in	September 18, 5:00 - 7:00 p.m. or September 19, 8:00 - 11:00 a.m.	Feeder steers must gain a minimum of 1.75# per day.
Evaluation	September 19, 2:00 p.m. until done	<p style="text-align: center;">Barn #31</p> <p>This is required for <u>all</u> livestock exhibitors. Sign-up at weigh-in.</p>
Beef Cattle Show	September 22, 9:00 a.m.	Show Arena
Dairy Beef Show	September 22, 9:00 a.m.	Show Arena
Feeder Steer Show	September 22, 9:00 a.m.	Show Arena
4-H Market Livestock Sale (large)	September 24, 10:30 a.m.	Sale order: Lambs, Beef Cattle, Dairy Market Seers, Gallon of Milk, Feeder Steers, Hogs
Load out from fair and Barn Clean Out	September 26, 11:00 p.m. or September 27, 5:30 a.m.	All members are required to clean their pens after loadout and help with teardown at 5:30 a.m. on Sunday