



Introduction

This award recognizes a more comprehensive development of livestock/animal project knowledge in alignment with the 4-H Livestock Management Triangle* (see the end of this document). The results are published on the SDSU Extension website following the South Dakota State Fair.

Award Categories

There are nine specie categories and three age divisions for each specie (Beginner, Junior, Senior):

- Beef
- Dairy (dairy cattle and dairy goat)
- Dog
- Horse
- Meat Goat
- Poultry
- Rabbit
- Sheep
- Swine

Age Divisions

Age divisions for the South Dakota 4-H program:

- Beginner: Age 8, 9, or 10 as of Jan. 1 of the current 4-H program year
- Junior: Age 11, 12, or 13 as of Jan. 1 of the current 4-H program year
- Senior: Age 14, 15, 16, 17, or 18 as of Jan. 1 of the current 4-H program year

Scoring and Participation Details

- Youth must participate in all three areas - showmanship, Skill-A-Thon and a state level show - within the species to be eligible for the Premier Exhibitor Award for that species.
 - The following exhibitions will be used for showmanship and show scores:
 - » State Fair 4-H Shows for all livestock
 - » State 4-H Horse Show for horse
 - » Regional 4-H Dog Championship shows for dog
 - The following contests will be used for Skill-A-Thon scores:
 - » Clover Classic State 4-H Livestock Skill-A-Thon Contest for beef, goat, sheep and swine
 - » 4-H Dairy Skill-A-Thon Contest at the State Fair for dairy
 - » 4-H Poultry Skill-A-Thon Contest at the State Fair for poultry
 - » 4-H Rabbit Skill-A-Thon Contest at the State Fair for rabbit
 - » State 4-H Hippology Contest at the State 4-H Horse show for horse
 - » 4-H Dog Skill-A-Thon Contest at the Regional Dog Championship shows for dog
- If a youth shows multiple animals within the same species, the highest score prevails. Youth cannot gain more than 100 points per matrix column.
- Youth may compete in any species category in which they show.
- Tie-breaker order: showmanship > Skill-A-Thon > Market/Breeding > Coin Toss
 - Note: The tie-breaker order reflects our skill priorities. That is, we celebrate work ethic and care first, knowledge-gain second, and so forth.

Recognition

The top two individuals in each age division within each species will receive an award. Full results will be posted on the state fair page of the SDSU Extension website once the scores have been finalized. Youth may be recognized in person at either the South Dakota State Fair or another venue depending on the species. Youth receiving an award will be notified of the recognition plan for their species once results have been finalized.

Beef, Meat Goat, Sheep and Swine Premier Exhibitor Contests Scoring Matrix

The Beef, Meat Goat, Sheep and Swine Premier Exhibitor Contests will each be separate contests, and each species will be divided into three age divisions: beginner, junior and senior.

Award	Highest Showmanship Score	Livestock Skill-A-Thon Score	Highest State Fair Market/Breeding Class Score
1st Overall in Age Division	100	Uses the 4-Her's total State 4-H Livestock Skill-A-Thon Contest* score divided by the total points possible and multiplied by 100 for a possible 100 points total.	
2nd Overall in Age Division	97		
3rd Overall in Age Division	94		
4th Overall in Age Division	91		
5th Overall in Age Division	88		
Purple Ribbon	85		100
Blue Ribbon	80		95
Red Ribbon	75		90
White Ribbon	70		85

* **Starting in 2026:** The State 4-H Livestock Skill-A-Thon contest will take place at the Clover Classic in June. Please see the South Dakota 4-H Website for more information on the Clover Classic and registration details.

Dairy, Poultry and Rabbit Premier Exhibitor Contests Scoring Matrix

The Dairy, Poultry and Rabbit Premier Exhibitor Contests will each be separate contests, and each species will be divided into three age divisions: beginner, junior and senior.

Award	Highest Showmanship Score	Livestock Skill-A-Thon Score	Highest State Fair Market/Breeding Class Score
1st Overall in Age Division	100	Uses the 4-Her's total State 4-H Livestock Skill-A-Thon Contest* score divided by the total points possible and multiplied by 100 for a possible 100 points total.	
2nd Overall in Age Division	97		
3rd Overall in Age Division	94		
4th Overall in Age Division	91		
5th Overall in Age Division	88		
Purple Ribbon	85		100
Blue Ribbon	80		95
Red Ribbon	75		90
White Ribbon	70		85

Dairy, Poultry and Rabbit species each have their own respective Skill-A-Thon contests that take place at the South Dakota State Fair. Please see the State Fair Schedule for more information on when these contests will take place.

Horse Premier Exhibitor Contest Scoring Matrix

Horse Premier Exhibitor Contest will be its own contest divided into three age divisions: beginner, junior and senior.

Award	Highest Showmanship Score	Livestock Skill-A-Thon Score	Highest State Fair Market/Breeding Class Score
1st Overall in Age Division	100	Uses the 4-Her's total State 4-H Hippology Contest score divided by the total points possible and multiplied by 100 for a possible 100 points total.	
2nd Overall in Age Division	97		
3rd Overall in Age Division	94		
4th Overall in Age Division	91		
5th Overall in Age Division	88		
Purple Ribbon	85		100
Blue Ribbon	80		95
Red Ribbon	75		90
White Ribbon	70		85

All events will take place at the State 4-H Horse Show. Please see the State 4-H Horse Show page on the website for more information on when the Hippology contest will take place.

Dog Premier Exhibitor Contest Scoring Matrix

Dog Premier Exhibitor Contest will be its own contest divided into three age divisions: beginner, junior and senior.

Award	Highest Showmanship Score	Livestock Skill-A-Thon Score	Highest State Fair Market/Breeding Class Score
1st Overall in Age Division	100	Uses the 4-Her's total Dog Skill-A-Thon Contest score divided by the total points possible and multiplied by 100 for a possible 100 points total.	
2nd Overall in Age Division	97		
3rd Overall in Age Division	94		
4th Overall in Age Division	91		
5th Overall in Age Division	88		
Purple Ribbon	85		100
Blue Ribbon	80		95
Red Ribbon	75		90
White Ribbon	70		85

All events will take place at the 4-H Regional Dog Championship shows. Please see the State 4-H Dog Show page on the website for more information on when the Dog Skill-A-Thon contest will take place at each regional dog show.

*** 4-H Livestock Management Triangle (Tanner, 2021)**

Youth often gain friendships and strengthen mental health by taking livestock projects, but our key developmental emphasis in 4-H livestock are workforce and life skills. The triangle below highlights the relationship between our key events and the skills developed along the way.

4-H Livestock Management Triangle

