

## **Rural Roots & Research**

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### **“The Future of Agriculture is Bright”**

“You can do hard things” is a powerful lesson to teach our young folks. Encouraging young people to develop resilience, character, and persistence helps grow them into powerful young leaders. We saw that development firsthand this last weekend at the State 4-H Livestock Sweepstakes Contests.

For those unfamiliar with the 4-H Livestock Sweepstakes Contest, this is a weekend-long event comprised of four separate livestock-focused contests. These contests include livestock judging, meat judging, livestock skillathon, and livestock quiz bowl. While all these different events test the 4-Her’s knowledge and abilities, the contests are also unique. The livestock judging competition participants evaluate animals’ characteristics, and the 4-Her’s use their knowledge of breeding and market standards to compare the differences between animals to rank them and be able to defend their rankings through the presentation of oral reasons. Meat judging is the evaluation of identifying wholesale and retail cuts of meat, as well as live carcasses. Livestock Skillathon allows 4-Her’s the opportunity to test their knowledge and skills in various areas of livestock production. The 4-Her’s may be tested on equipment, breeds, feed, animal health, etc. The Livestock Quiz Bowl contest begins with a written exam, challenging the 4-H members’ knowledge on various livestock topics and current events in agriculture. If your team scores within the top 12 teams in Quiz Bowl, they are then offered a spot in the “head-to-head” competition. This competition features two four-person teams competing against each other, allowing members to compete to see which team can answer the most questions correctly about livestock and animal agriculture. As you can see, all of the contests vary greatly and allow our 4-Hers a great deal of opportunity to test their knowledge in a fun, competitive environment.

Many of us involved in agriculture got our start in competing in competitions exactly like the ones held this weekend. The participants were addressed by both dean \_\_\_\_\_ this weekend, who both attributed some of their early skill development in resiliency and decision making to their early years involved in 4-H livestock contests. I know I attribute a great deal of my career success to those early years competing in livestock competitions as well.

This year, approximately 300 4-H members from 60 different counties across the state participated. Riley County was well represented in the contest by having a team in every competition throughout the weekend (livestock judging, meat judging, livestock skillathon, and livestock quiz bowl). As you can imagine, the competition throughout the weekend was fierce. Teams are made up of the most passionate and practiced youth from those individual counties, to face off in the state contests. Our teams this weekend included Riley County 4-H members: Dalyn Eckhoff, Cannon Huncovsky, Lakyn Huncovsky, Katherine Bormann, Genayla Warnken, Trista Warnken, and Lucas Bormann.

We had many individual successes and great personal skill growth all weekend, and we're also proud of some of the finishes. One of the biggest things to note was that our Riley County team scored 5<sup>th</sup> Overall Sweepstakes Team. What makes this exceptionally special is that the Sweepstakes award is awarded to the teams that compete in every competition throughout the contests. In simpler terms, our teams in livestock judging, meat judging, livestock skillathon, and livestock quiz bowl all performed well enough in their contests to be among the top teams overall for the weekend. This is a very coveted placing, and hard to achieve. As you can imagine, it's hard to do well in every single contest throughout the weekend (four contests in total).

Please feel free to stop by the Riley County Extension Office with any of your agriculture questions, or just to say hello! I can also be reached by phone at 785-537-6350 or by email at [lindsayshorter@ksu.edu](mailto:lindsayshorter@ksu.edu). I look forward to meeting new faces and seeing some old ones along the way, and I look forward to answering your agriculture and natural resources questions!