

Dairy Cattle Evaluation

Rule years 2026–2029 · Revision 1 · Published October 9, 2026

0. General Rules & Eligibility

Career Development Events are governed by the NAEA CDE Committee. All events follow [CDE General Rules and Eligibility](#).

Qualification for this event

District qualification	All schools (open enrollment)
Students per team	4
Grades	9–12
National qualifying event?	Yes
Timeframe	State Fair
Host	NECC Animal Science Dept.
Event Superintendent	Mike Roeber

1. Overview

The purpose of the Dairy Evaluation CDE is to provide a competitive event for agricultural education students which emphasizes skills in dairy cattle management and evaluation.

Objectives

Team Activity:

- Each team of 4 students will have up to 10 minutes to present their solution to a management problem to a panel of judges. The team will act as consultants to solve the management problem and then present their solution to the judges. The management problem topic will be determined based on the topic for the National FFA Dairy Evaluation contest to be held that year. After the presentation, the panel of judges will have up to 5 minutes to ask the team questions.
- Through the team activity, students will develop the following:
 - Organizational skills.
 - Problem-solving skills.
 - Oral presentation skills.
 - The ability to work as a team.
 - The ability to process information and answer questions.

Written Test:

- Students will answer multiple-choice questions covering the following: dairy cattle nutrition, anatomy, reproduction, breed characteristics and identification, diseases and disorders associated with dairy cattle, and common management practices and facilities.
- Students will select animals based on individual analysis of a dairy herd record analysis chart.

Evaluation:

- The contestant will independently evaluate and rank six classes of four dairy animals. These classes may include calves, replacement heifers, and/or dry or producing cows of varying breeds.

Oral Reasons:

- Develop and deliver three sets of oral reasons. Oral reason classes will be announced before the judging starts. Using notes during the presentation is discouraged.
- Students will speak using strategies that ensure clarity, logic, purpose, professionalism, and correct dairy cattle industry terminology in their oral reasons.
- Produce clear and reasoned oral communication by writing and presenting oral reasons. (SEE APPENDIX for Rubric.)

2. Eligibility & Team

Open to students in Grades 9–12. Teams are 4 students. All schools (open enrollment) advance. This event is national-qualifying.

- Any agricultural education students enrolled in an agricultural education class may compete in this CDE. As this event occurs at the Nebraska State Fair in August, agricultural education students who graduated the previous spring are eligible to compete.
- A graduating senior is considered eligible to compete in state CDEs up to and including his or her first national convention following graduation.
- Students who have competed in a previous National Dairy Evaluation CDE are not eligible to participate in the Nebraska Dairy Evaluation CDE.
- Each school may enter one team of 4 contestants who will compete in all areas of the Dairy Evaluation CDE.
- Each school may also enter up to 4 additional contestants who will complete the individual components of the contest and will be eligible for individual awards only.
- As this contest is held in conjunction with the State 4-H Dairy Judging contest, eligible students may participate in both contests as long as they meet entry requirements
- To ensure that students participating in both the FFA and 4-H portion of the contest are eligible, any potential alternates to the FFA teams must be listed at the time of registration.
- Registration fees for the contest are \$5 per individual.

3. What to Bring

Attire

- For the placing and oral reasons portion of the contest, contestants are required to wear the current State Fair t-shirt which will be provided to the contestants. Contestants competing in both FFA and 4-H portions of the contest may wear either the FFA or 4-H State Fair t-shirt. (Official FFA dress is **not appropriate** attire for this CDE.)
- For the team portion of the contest, teams may wear their State Fair FFA t-shirts, Official FFA Dress, Chapter FFA t-shirts or polos, or other appropriate attire.

Supplies

- Each contestant should have a writing instrument and notebook for note-taking during the contest.
- Bring a laptop to give the presentation with the necessary adapters, or bring a USB Drive with the presentation on it.

- A computer (PowerPoint-compatible), LCD projector with cables, screen, internet access, a table, and 1 podium will be provided.
- Absolutely **NO electronic devices**, including cell phones, electronic notebooks, readers, tablets, iPods, etc., may be used during the individual portion of this event.

4. Event Format

Timing

- A. Entries are due to the contest superintendent by August 10 (State Fair Requirement.)
- B. Team scenarios will be emailed to registered teams between August 11-15th.
- C. The contest will take place during the weekend of the Dairy Cattle show of the Nebraska State Fair in conjunction with the State 4-H Dairy Evaluation contest.
 - I. 8:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m. – Team presentations and individual written exams; exact time to be designated for each school.
 - II. 12-12:15 p.m. Judging Contest Registration
 - III. 12:15-12:30 p.m. Judging Orientation
 - IV. 12:30-2 p.m. Judging of classes; contestants will be given 12 - 15 minutes to judge each class
 - V. 2-2:15 p.m. Break (Contestants will move to a different location to give oral reasons.)
 - VI. 2:15-4 p.m. Oral Reasons Given; contestants will be given at least 15 minutes between sets of reasons to prepare their next set of reasons
 - VII. 5:00-6:30 p.m. – Dairy Contest Awards Ceremony

Format

Theme

- A. The team presentation will cover a topic similar to the National FFA Dairy Evaluation topic for that year and may include:
 - I. Genetics/Reproduction
 - II. Housing/Facilities
 - III. Health/Diseases
 - IV. Young Stock Management
 - V. Feeds/Nutrition

Event Components

- A. **Individual Exam:** The management test will contain 50 questions: 40 industry-related questions and 10 questions using a dairy herd record evaluation sheet to evaluate individual cows.
 - I. Modern Livestock and Poultry Production textbook. Chapters 3, 4, 5, 6, 9, 10, and 39 - 46.
 - II. National Agricultural Statistics Service Dairy Cattle facts.
 - III. Dairy Cow Unified Scorecard
- B. **Judging Component:** Each contestant will place six classes of dairy cattle.
 - I. Every effort will be made to select classes of different breeds. Selection is based on cattle availability.
 - II. Resource Hoard's Dairyman Magazine.
- C. **Oral Reasons:** Each contestant will give three sets of oral reasons.

D. **Team Scenario:** Each team will receive a dairy farm management scenario to identify problems and determine possible improvements. Teams should assume the role of a hired consultant advising a producer (judges). Teams will have 10 minutes to complete their presentation, with an additional five minutes allowed for questions from the judges.

5. Scoring & Tiebreakers

Individual Scoring

Component	Detail	Points
Management Test	50 Questions × 2 Points	100
Placing Classes	6 Classes × 50 Points	300
Oral Reasons	3 Sets × 50 Points	150
Grand total		550

Individual Tiebreakers

If needed, the following tiebreakers will be used in the order listed:

- Total reasons score
- Lower placing score on reasons classes
- Written test score
- Total placing score

Team Scoring

Component	Detail	Points
Sum of Individual Scores	4 Students × 550 Points	2,200
Team Presentation	Scored by rubric (Appendix B: Scoring Rubric)	200
Grand total		2,400

Team Tiebreakers

Team tiebreakers are resolved in the order listed below.

- Team ties will be broken using the same criteria as the individual tiebreaker, based on team totals in each area.

6. Study Resources

Approved study resources

- [UNL CDE Study Materials Folder \(OneDrive\)](#) — Practice materials and examples for this CDE.

- A thorough list of resources is listed in the rules for the National FFA Dairy Evaluation CDE information. Possible resources include the Hoard's Dairyman magazine and Animal Science textbooks, websites, or other publications.
- Modern Livestock & Poultry Production, 9th Edition. Frank Flanders and James R. Gillespie. Cengage Learning, 2016. ISBN: 978-1-133-28350-8 — Chapters 3, 4, 5, 6, 9, 10, & 39–46.
- [National Agricultural Statistics Service Dairy Cattle Facts](#)
- [Dairy Cow Unified Scorecard](#)
- [Hoard's Dairyman Magazine](#)
- [National FFA Dairy Cattle Evaluation Resources](#)
- [Dairy Cattle Evaluation & Management page on the Nebraska CDEs website](#) — Nebraska Dairy Cattle Evaluation resources.

Past Exams

- A copy of the exam will be emailed to all participating chapters following the completion of the contest. Others wishing to obtain past exams need to contact the event superintendent.

7. After the Event

Official placings of the classes will be shared following the completion of the contest.

Copies of the judges' critique sheets will be sent to the participating schools as soon as possible after the contest.

A list of class providers and sponsors will be shared with the participating schools, for the purpose of writing thank you notes.

List of Appendices

- [Appendix A: Oral Reasons Scoring Guidelines](#)
- [Appendix B: Scoring Rubric](#)

Appendix A: Oral Reasons Scoring Guidelines

45-50 points	Completely accurate, correct organization, excellent delivery.
40-44 points	Mostly accurate, correct organization, adequate delivery.
30-39 points	Inaccurate in places, improper organization in spots, need more specific detail, average delivery.
20-29 points	Completely inaccurate, prioritization unclear, marginal detail, poor delivery.
<20 points	Minimal effort, did not appear to care or be involved in the event.

Appendix B: Scoring Rubric

Indicators	Very Strong 19 – 25 points	Strong 13 – 18 points	Fair 7 – 12 points	Poor 0 – 6 points	Score	Weight	Total Score
General Appearance	Everyone neat and properly dressed	Most of the team neat and properly dressed	Some of the team neat and properly dressed	Few to none of the team members neat and properly dressed		* 1	
Value of Information	Does an excellent job with supplying information for the problems	Does a good job of supplying information for the problems	Does a fair job of supplying information for the problems	Does a poor job of supplying information for the problems		* 2	
Effectiveness	Information provided in a very convincing manner	Information provided in a strong manner	Information provided but is not very convincing in presentation	Information given in a very poor manner		* 2	
Distribution of Activity	All team members participate in presentation	Only 3 members participate in presentation	Only 2 members participate in presentation	Only 1 team member presents the presentation		* 1	
Response to Questions	All questions are answered confidently and correctly	Most of the questions are answered confidently and correctly	Some of the questions are answered confidently and correctly	Few if any of the questions are answered confidently and correctly		* 2	

A. Total possible points per individual is 550.

B. Total possible points per team is 2400 (4 contestants @ 550 points each plus team activity worth 200 points)

Subcommittee

Standing subcommittee for this event

Name	School / Organization	Role
Tanner Nun	Diller-Odell	Chair
Mike Roeber	NECC — Animal Science Department	Superintendent
Chad Schimmels	Eustis-Farnam	Exec liaison
Jon Anderson	Norfolk	Member
Kelly Guggenmos	Wheeler Central	Member
Kurt Wissenburg	Lewiston Consolidated	Member

What changed — 2026–2029 rev 1 EDITORIAL

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