2014 Michigan 4-H Livestock Judging National Teams Fall 2014

Audience

In 2014, eight 4-H members representing Michigan were named from seven counties including Cass, Clinton, Kent, St. Joseph, Monroe, Ogemaw and Washtenaw. These youth were excited about the opportunity to participate on behalf of Michigan through competitive livestock judging. The talented individuals from across the state were selected as a result of their placing at the Michigan 4-H/FFA Livestock Judging Contest held in conjunction with the Michigan Livestock Expo in July. Youth also participated in numerous practices this summer and fall to be selected to compete in the national contests. Clinton County member Victoria Olger stated, "This experience has been very beneficial to me. It has given me more knowledge and understanding of what a quality animal should possess along with making me more comfortable speaking in front of people."

Funding

Team members were required to pay for their in-state travel expenses as well as the majority of their meals on the national trips. Travel support for the 2014 Michigan 4-H National Livestock Judging teams was provided by the following donors: Alvin J. Thelen Memorial donations; The Andersons, Inc.; Robert and Shirley Chapman; Family Farm and Home; Fifth Third Michigan State Fair; JBS United; Kent County 4-H; Michigan Soybean Promotion Committee; Michigan Youth Livestock Scholarship Fund; Ogemaw County 4-H; Reaume Hog Farms; L.C. and Jackie Scramlin; St. Joseph 4-H Youth Council; Steve and Nancy Thelen; and the Breuninger, Chapman and King Families.

Objectives

The national 4-H judging teams are designed to:

- Educate youth on Michigan's current issues and trends in livestock production within the Midwest.
- Develop problem solving and critical thinking skills through evaluation of livestock.
- Enhance livestock evaluation and selection skills.
- Improve communication and decision making skills.
- Allow talented individuals, who may not otherwise have the opportunity, the chance to compete on national teams.

In regards to this new opportunity for Michigan 4-H members, St. Joseph County member Loren King stated, "This program is perfect for developing knowledge of livestock, learning public speaking, and making new friends."

Description

Participants visited more than 20 farms and facilities in preparation for the contests and were assisted by numerous individuals from MI, IN, PA, and KY.

One cross-county team competed at the Keystone International Livestock Exposition (Keystone) in Harrisburg, PA in October and the second team traveled to the National 4-H Contest at the North American International Livestock Exposition (NAILE) in Louisville, KY in November. Washtenaw County member Amanda Breuninger reflected on her experience at the Keystone International stating, "I have been able to incorporate the things that I have learned in livestock judging to everyday life. It has helped me become more confident in public speaking and decision making. Judging is a great way to meet new people, learn more about livestock and be able to understand why judges place a class in a certain way."

Contestants at the Keystone International evaluated twelve classes consisting of four individuals in each class. There were five classes of beef cattle, three classes of sheep and four classes of swine. Contestants then delivered four sets of reasons and answered two sets of questions each on a specific class. Being recognized individually for their accomplishments in the contest, was Brad Chapman (6th in Sheep), Logan Denby (7th in Beef, 3rd in Sheep, 6th in Reasons and 7th Overall) and Victoria Olger (9th in Beef, 9th in Reasons and 9th Overall). Individual totals from the contest are combined to create a team score. Placing seventh overall as a team were members Amanda Breuninger, Brad Chapman, Loren King and Victoria Olger. Cameron Hayden and Alexandria Schut also completed as individuals in the contest in preparation for NAILE.

Contestants at NAILE evaluated eleven classes consisting of four individuals in each class. There were four classes of beef cattle, four classes of sheep and three classes of swine. Contestants then delivered four sets of reasons and answered three sets of questions each on a specific class. Logan Denby placed 10th overall in the swine division at the national contest.

When asked about the skills they learned, Monroe County member Brad Chapman stated, "During my judging experience, I learned the most about communication and how to always portray confidence."

Impacts

- 100% of the participants agreed or strongly agreed that they were more knowledgeable about livestock judging.
- 100% said they felt more knowledgeable about entrepreneurship and career opportunities for youth to pursue in science related fields.
- 100% plan on applying the science knowledge and skills from this workshop.

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