

4-H Swine Project

RFR-A1952

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Introduction

Due to a decreased number of pork producers in Monona County, area youth have had fewer opportunities to learn about or exhibit swine. In 2010, there was one pig exhibited at the Monona County Fair. A special swine project was started by Monona County Extension in partnership with a local farmer. The program was designed to reach all area youth. Specifically, it provides extensive, hands-on animal science and agricultural education to youth who would otherwise not have had the opportunity. The program has grown dramatically since its origin. In 2019, ISU and the Western Research Demonstration Farm agreed to house 106 pigs on-site for educational use by 4-H members. The niche market swine company that partners with the research farm agreed to supply the pigs and provide additional education.

Youth Expectations

4-H participants in grades 4 through 12 are expected to meet several obligations as part of the swine project. Members and guardians sign a contract and pay a nominal fee of \$30 each. They must sign up for chore shifts, receive their Youth Quality Care of Animals certification, and attend several showmanship and educational sessions. Meetings occur bi-weekly from April-July. A final meeting is held in August to discuss profitability and distribute awards to top program participants. Youth sort and weigh pigs, track rate-of-gain, master showmanship skills and work as a team with research farm staff, county swine superintendents, and extension staff.

Participants are expected to exhibit up to three pigs at the Monona County Fair. They are expected to follow herdsmanship guidelines, the 4-H Code of Ethics, and participate in fundraising for the project.

Education Provided

The 2019 project provided over 26 hours of education to 27 youth participants at the ISU Western Research Farm. Youth were solely responsible for their swine for five full days at the Monona County Fair. Education was led by Dave Stender, ISU swine specialist, Chris Beedle, Melissa Beermann, industry experts, and 4-H volunteers. Participants gain hands-on knowledge of biosecurity, showmanship, marketing, breeds, feed content, cuts of meat, disease, rate-of-gain, record-keeping, good production practices, and more.

Outcomes

The 4-H swine project reaches a group of non-traditional agriculture program participants. Most participants do not live on a farm. A majority of participants are females and of lower socio-economic status.

Youth who would not otherwise have had the opportunity have been successfully educated and encouraged to pursue future endeavors with animal science and local careers in agriculture. Community outreach efforts such as the free local foods dinner at the Monona County Fair, swine bonus auction, and media attention have all connected the community to Iowa State University and the agricultural industry.

Acknowledgements

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