



4-H Swine Project

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Due to a decreased number of pork producers in Monona County, 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 office and now is in partnership with the Western Research and Demonstration Farm. The program is designed to reach all area youth. A grant in 2020 made it possible to expand the program to reach racially and ethnically diverse youth as part of the Science Bound program in Crawford County. 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 2021 the Western Research and Demonstration Farm housed 125 pigs on-site for educational use by 4-H members.

Youth Expectations

4-H participants in grades 4-12 are expected to meet several obligations as part of the 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 (YQCA) certification, and attend several showmanship and educational sessions. In-person workshops were held mostly in a small-group format. Extension staff provided 15 in-person sessions at the farm from March to July. A swine and poultry education day was held June 15 for youth from Monona, Harrison, and Crawford counties. 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. A club barbecue and family night was held in late August to discuss profitability and distribute awards to top program participants.

Education Provided

Twenty-six youth participants gained between 35 to 65 hours of in-person and online education at the farm. Virtual platforms included 4-H 'Animal U' and YQCA. Youth were solely responsible for their swine an additional five full days at the Monona County Fair. Education is led by ISU Extension and Outreach Swine Specialist Dave Stender, 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 have otherwise 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 4-H Premium Fund, swine bonus auction and media attention all have connected the community to Iowa State and the agricultural industry. The project has now become a chartered 4-H club, appropriately named "The Breakfast Club" (for eggs and bacon).

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