CLEMSON
COOPERATIVE EXTENSION

Dairy Heifer Project

2020-Handbook

South Carolina
Youth Livestock Program

Dairy Heifer Project Committee

Dr. Tom Dobbins	Director, Clemson Cooperative Extension
Tina Horn	Extension Associate, Project Coordinator
Carrie Bolin	York County 4-H Dairy Club Leader
Mark Cathcart	Union County 4-H Agent
Charlie Kelly	Livestock Poultry Health; Clemson University
Amanda Lutz	Dairy Industry Representative

The 2020-2021 Dairy Heifer Project Coordinator is Tina Horn, thorn@clemson.edu, 803-944-2089. For immediate questions or concerns regarding your dairy heifer or the project in general, please contact Tina with any questions before contacting anyone else. This will help save time in getting the help you need.

The Committee works to ensure high learning outcomes and successful project experiences for each participant. They also develop and implement the rules and regulations that govern the project. All decisions made by the Project Committee are final.

Project Overview

Any active 4-H or FFA member, age 5-17, can raise and show a registered dairy heifer for 18 months in the South Carolina Dairy Heifer Project. Interested youth submit applications January through February and in the spring (usually April), at the Project Kick-Off participants will randomly draw for their dairy heifer. Currently, there are three breeds of dairy cattle being used in the project: Holstein, Jersey, and Guernsey. Producers continually support this project by providing high-quality heifers to project youth at a largely discounted price. Participants are expected to pay for their heifers, in full, at Kick-Off. There may be financial opportunities available to help offset the initial cost of a heifer.

During the next 18 months, participants learn how to care for, manage, train, and show their animal while exploring the world of dairy cattle. Participants keep detailed records about their project animal and their learning experiences in their project record book. Since the participants purchase the animal they are responsible for all expenses and incidences associated with that animal (feed, veterinary care, breeding, illness, death of animal, etc.).

Once the heifer reaches proper breeding age and size, the participant is responsible for getting their heifer bred. The goal is to have the heifers ready to breed by February and successfully confirmed pregnant by May of the following year, which will result in them being due to calve shortly after the Bred Heifer Sale at the State Fair in October. This serves as the conclusion of the project in which participants show their heifer one more time during the dairy cattle show and then all heifers are sold in the Bred Heifer Sale. The participant keeps money earned from the sale of their heifer minus any fees. After all heifers have been sold, participants submit their Project Record Book for scoring.

History of the Dairy Heifer Project

The Dairy Program is one of the oldest in 4-H. Throughout the years, thousands of boys and girls from all over South Carolina have taken part in 4-H dairy work. These 4-H alumni are now found in all "walks of life." Many are outstanding farmers. Some are doctors, veterinarians, and teachers, while some are leaders in the business industry. In nearly every case, these people look back on their 4-H dairy experience as an outstanding part of their youth.

Each year, 4-H and FFA dairy project members exhibit their dairy project animals at fairs, shows, and events in nearly every region of the state. Millions of people have seen or learned about 4-H and FFA through these youth dairy exhibits at the many fairs and events in South Carolina. This offers a tremendous opportunity for 4-H, FFA, Clemson Cooperative Extension, and the dairy industry to educate and inform the public about the dairy industry and youth dairy programs.

With the number of dairy farms decreasing, the dairy project provides opportunities for all youth to learn about dairying and the dairy industry. Our youth are the future of the industry and the project helps to educate and motivate our dairy youth and those youth who are not from a dairy but have an interest in dairy.

The Dairy Heifer Project was developed to bridge that gap. It began in 1974 and was designed to provide boys and girls in South Carolina, who have non-dairy backgrounds, an opportunity to raise a dairy heifer and experience the dairy industry, and then sell their heifer at the South Carolina Dairy Bred Heifer Sale before she begins milking. Now, many youth with non-dairy backgrounds can participate and experience the dairy industry without the requirement of milking facilities. In addition, the Dairy Bred Heifer Sale serves as an excellent source of herd replacements for South Carolina dairymen.

Dairy Heifer Project Objectives

The South Carolina Dairy Heifer Project works hard to help participants:

- Develop character and life skills through 4-H and/or FFA work.
- Develop integrity and sportsmanship by caring for, training, and showing a dairy heifer.
- Increase experience with and knowledge about the dairy industry and dairy products.
- Develop a better understanding of basic dairy heifer anatomy, nutrition, management and healthcare.
- Stimulate positive public interest in the dairy industry.
- Be a positive ambassador to the public for 4-H, FFA, and animal agriculture.
- Learn and use business principles including use of animal records and financial records.
- Furnish a source of well-grown replacements for dairy herds.

Participant Eligibility

Participants must:

- Be, and remain, a current, dues paying member in active status of either 4-H or FFA. You will not receive a heifer if you do not have an active status with 4-H or FFA or have not paid current membership fees to your 4-H Agent or FFA Advisor. Because this is a long-term project it spans two membership years. You must remain current both years. If your membership lapses during the project your membership fees will be taken out of the final sale price of your heifer and you will not be eligible to receive another heifer in the future.
- Be at least 5 years of age at the date of enrollment.
- Because this is an 18-month project, you must also not be over 17 years of age as of January 1st of this project year, unless approved by the Heifer Project Committee.
- Can purchase and pay in full for their heifer at the project Kick-Off. Financial assistance may be available (refer to the "Payments and Financing" section for more information).
- Can attend (with a parent or legal guardian) the project Kick-Off, unless other arrangements have been approved by the committee chairperson prior to the event. Each project member will draw for his/her heifer that day and is responsible for getting their heifer home.
- Can properly house and care for a dairy heifer for 18 months. Participants are responsible for all expenses (feed bills, veterinary expenses, transportation, etc.) Must have access to a farm or adequate acreage with adequate shelter and space to house a dairy heifer for 18 months with an ending weight of approximately 1,600 pounds.
- Be willing to house and properly raise a dairy heifer for approximately 18 months.
- Send in the Official Monthly Record Sheet to the Heifer Project Coordinator or committee member the first week of each month.
- Agree to get their project heifer bred in mid-January/early February unless given permission by the committee to breed earlier.
- Contact committee member if heifer is not confirmed pregnant by May 1, 2021.
- Agree to sell their heifer in the Bred Heifer Sale held in Columbia, SC during the State Fair. If the heifer calves prior to or during the State Fair, notify the Project Coordinator IMMEDIATELY. Both the project heifer AND the calf will be sold during the Bred Heifer Sale. All heifer calves will be sold. Bull calves may be kept.
- Be responsible for all costs incurred during the duration of the Project (feed, housing, veterinarians, breeding, etc.).
- Be aware that often members only break even, and some even lose money. It is a time-consuming and sometimes costly project. The goal of a youth livestock project is learning and experiencing animal agriculture while developing life-skills!

There will be a two heifer per family limit unless approved by the Heifer Project Committee.

It is recommended that participants obtain insurance on their heifer. If anything happens to the project heifer (gets sick, dies, causes an auto accident, etc.), the participant is liable for all expenses incurred (loans still must be paid back) and the committee will not reimburse for expenses or replace heifers in such situations. There are few exceptions to this, and it is left to the committee to evaluate each circumstance and determine if there will be any project involvement. The decision of the committee is final.

Participants are highly encouraged to submit a Dairy Heifer Project Record Book immediately following the Bred Heifer Sale.

Participant Selection in Case of Heifer Shortage

The Project Committee remains committed to providing as many quality heifers as needed; however, for various reasons the number of heifers the committee can secure may not equal the number of applicants for the project. The priority of the Dairy Heifer Project is to get youth involved who do not have a project heifer and DO have the means to take care of the heifer. Participants must have means to take care of their heifer (land, shelter, ability to purchase feed, veterinary care, etc.). The following criteria have been established and will be utilized in the selection of participants from the applicant pool *should the committee not be able to secure a sufficient number of dairy heifers:*

1. New Applicants
2. Project success in previous years (condition and reproductive status at sale time)
3. Level of Project Participation in past years
   - Submission and completion of the Monthly Reports and Project Record Book
   - Number of shows in which the applicant competed
3. Order the applications were submitted

Payments and Financing

2020 prices are set at $600.00 for all breeds: Holsteins, Jerseys, and Guernseys.

Each participant is responsible for payment of his or her heifer. Payment in full will be expected on the day of the Kick-off. If other arrangements need to be made, they must be approved by the Project Coordinator in advance.

The project can only accept cash or check. Checks need to be payable to Clemson University. If a check bounces, the participant will be invoiced for the heifer along with a bounced check fee, and for each

month the balance goes unpaid an overdue fee will be added to the balance until the amount is paid in full to the project. If the balance is not taken care of prior to the Bred Heifer Sale the balance due will be taken out of the sale price of the participant's heifer.

The South Carolina Holstein Association offers 2 interest-free loans for 4-H/FFA members who qualify. These are loans and must be PAID BACK! The application for the Dairy Heifer Project must indicate that the individual wishes to be considered for the South Carolina Holstein Association Loan. The qualifications are:

1. 1st time in the Heifer Project,
2. A 50-100-word essay on why they are interested in the Holstein breed, and
3. A recommendation letter from their county agent or agricultural teacher. The county agent or agricultural teacher is to certify that the 4-H/FFA member recommended can provide quality care for the heifer. Also, the county agent or agricultural teacher is to check on the heifer periodically and send a report to Clemson.
4. Recipients of the loan will sign a Loan Agreement Form and be required to abide by all heifer project guidelines.

Project Win-A-Heifer - The South Carolina State Fair sponsors heifers at the Heifer Project Kick-off. The youth selected to receive these scholarship animals will be chosen from those who are applying to participate in the Dairy Heifer Project. The application for the Dairy Heifer Project must indicate that the individual wishes to be considered as a candidate for Project Win-A-Heifer. Requirements are:

1. Project members are eligible to win a scholarship heifer no more than two (2) times.
2. Must be a 4-H or FFA member.
3. Must have been in the Heifer Project or in the 4-H dairy project for at least two years.
4. Must submit a recommendation letter from their county agent or agricultural teacher with the application. The county agent or agricultural teacher is to certify that the 4H/FFA member recommended can provide quality care for the heifer.
5. Must submit most recent 4-H Dairy Heifer Project or Dairy Project Record Book with the application.
6. Must submit a 100-500-word essay about their experiences in the 4-H dairy program and why they feel they should be awarded a scholarship heifer.
7. Recipients will agree to show the project heifer at the State Fair Junior Dairy Show the following two years.
8. Recipients of the scholarship heifers will be members of the 4-H Dairy Heifer Project, sign a Heifer Project Agreement Form, and are required to abide by all heifer project guidelines.

Farm Service Agency (FSA) offers Rural Youth Loans to help rural youth learn the business of agriculture. Visit your local FSA office or their website www.fsa.usda.gov for more information.

Heifers

These are animals. Animals can get sick, injured, or die. Once you purchase your heifer she is yours and therefore if she gets sick, injured, or dies she is your responsibility. The Heifer Project is not responsible for replacing sick or injured heifers. There are few exceptions to this and it is left to the committee to evaluate each circumstance and determine if there will be any project involvement. The decision of the committee is final.

Participants can select a breed preference. However, each participant must list a second and third choice in the event there are fewer heifers per breed than requested. Breed preference IS NOT guaranteed.

The committee works with all cooperating producers and will select all calves. Calves will primarily be purchased from South Carolina dairymen. Breed representatives will encourage their producers to make calves available to the project.

Calves for this project will be born approximately August, September, and October and registered. These calves will be out of cows with herd average production or above. An effort will be made to select a very uniform group of calves with no major differences in size and production characteristics. In addition, calves will also be selected for desirable type.

Project Participant Responsibilities

The following is a list of your responsibilities as the participant in the Dairy Heifer Project. If you have any problems during the project, please notify Tina Horn, thorn@clemson.edu, 803-944-2089 immediately. The committee is here to help!

- You will need to select a project mentor to help guide you through the project. This person should be highly experienced, qualified, and willing to help you learn how to properly care for, train, and show a dairy heifer.
  The following people would be excellent to consider:
  - 4-H club leader
  - high school agriculture teacher
  - 4-H Extension Agent
  - local dairy producer or other industry professional.

- Attend the Dairy Heifer Project Kick-off in the Spring.

- Show in at least one dairy show prior to the Junior Dairy Show at the SC State Fair.

- You are encouraged to participate in other dairy events and activities in your county and across the state.

- REQUIRED to show and participate at the SC State Fair Junior Dairy Show. This is critical to the success of the Dairy Heifer project and provides our dairymen with the opportunity to see their heifers at the show and so that they can be vaccinated at that time.

- Practice leading and working with your heifer daily.

- A Heifer Project Committee Member will visit each participant on the farm at least once a year. All participants **must** make their heifer available for evaluation.

- Participants must feed and care for their heifer as prescribed by the Heifer Project Committee, Clemson Dairy Extension personnel, and/or their project mentor to grow the heifer out in a manner which will allow her to develop to her maximum inherited ability. Follow the guidance and advice of your project mentor or Heifer Project Committee.

- Any participant that is suspected of or determined to be abusing or neglecting animals or acting in an unsportsmanlike manner can be dismissed from a show, removed from the project, have their heifer removed from their care, or banned from future animal projects as deemed necessary by the project committee. All committee decisions are final.

- All participants <u>are required</u> to submit monthly growth and feeding information to Tina Horn. Weight, height, and feed intake can be emailed monthly to thorn@clemson.edu.

- You are required to submit your <u>Dairy Heifer Project Record Book</u> by January 15 of each year. These need to be turned into Tina Horn, Dairy Heifer Project Coordinator.

- Each heifer must be bred to a superior registered dairy bull. This breeding will take place when the heifer reaches the proper age and size for breeding and so that she will calve shortly after the Dairy Bred Heifer Sale at the South Carolina State Fair.

  a. Pregnancy of heifer should be confirmed by May 1. Should there be complications getting the heifer pregnant, Tina Horn should be notified as soon as problems are noted. If heifer is not confirmed pregnant by May 1, heifer will be returned to the consigner (breeder) or an approved producer at the 4-H/FFA members expense for breeding. 4-H/FFA member will be charged a minimum of $2/day for heifer care plus breeding expenses to be paid to the producer.

  b. Should the heifer be deemed a “nonbreeder” due to body condition or care as determined by a veterinarian, the heifer may be removed from the 4-H/FFA member as determined by the Heifer Project Committee. If the heifer is removed from the project, the 4-H/FFA member will not be allowed to participate in future Dairy Heifer Projects.

c. Upon return to the consignor (breeder) of the heifer or approved producer, should the heifer be determined to be a "nonbreeder" by a veterinarian for reasons other than body condition or animal care, the consignor (breeder) has the option to refund the purchase price of the heifer to the 4-H/FFA member or replace the heifer with a comparable heifer of the producer's choice.

d. "Carryover" heifers (not sold in the sale due to not being pregnant) cannot be shown in showmanship at the South Carolina State Fair.

e. Should the 4-H/FFA member have to carryover the heifer, the 4-H/FFA will not be allowed to receive another heifer until the "carryover" heifer is sold in the next Bred Heifer Sale at the SC State Fair.

- It is important to have a licensed Veterinarian inspect heifers in the fall of their first year prior to breeding them (November-December).

Dairy Heifer Project Kick-Off

The Dairy Heifer Project Kick-Off will be held at the T Ed Garrison Arena, Clemson, SC on April 24, 2020. All participants and a parent or legal guardian must be present at Kick-Off unless approved by the committee prior to the event. In addition, agents and teachers are encouraged to attend.

Calves will be assembled at the Garrison Arena for Kick-Off. Registration will begin at 5:00 p.m. with the Kick-Off activities starting at 5:30 p.m. The consignor will be responsible for transportation of calves to Kick-Off, but participants will be responsible for transportation of calves back to their home. The heifer project participants must make these arrangements.

Calves will be numbered and participants will be randomly selected to draw for their calf.
Through this method, the participants and calves will be randomly matched. This means that all Holstein participants will draw for Holsteins, Jersey participants will draw for Jerseys, and Guernsey participants will draw for Guernseys.

Bred Heifer Sale & SC State Fair

The Dairy Heifer Project concludes with an all-breed Bred Heifer Sale that is held in conjunction with the South Carolina State Fair in October in Columbia, SC.

Youth are responsible for registering to show at the SC State Fair.

- State Fair regular registration is typically open from July 1 – September 1
- LATE registration is typically September 2-26
- Absolutely NO registrations are accepted after the deadline!

To bring maximum dollars for your heifer, project members should write the breeder of their heifer and any other dairymen and personally invite them to the SC Dairy Bred Heifer Sale at least one month prior to the sale.

To bring the most benefit to the youth in this project and taking into consideration the historical buyer's information from this sale, we are no longer requiring all sale heifers to be blood tested for TB and Brucellosis prior to the sale. HOWEVER, if a heifer is sold to an individual traveling to a state that requires these tests, arrangements for testing will have to be made and the cost of the test will be the project member's responsibility. Other expenses will be dealt with on a case by case basis with the project member, Project Committee, and buyer. You can still have your heifer tested prior to the sale, simply present paperwork at the time of project check-in.

All sale heifers will be pregnancy checked by a veterinarian the evening before the sale. The project member (or a family member) needs to be present to make the heifer available for pregnancy check, accurately identify their animal, and answer any questions about breeding information.

If the heifer calves prior to or during the State Fair with a heifer calf, notify the Project Coordinator IMMEDIATELY. Both the project heifer AND the calf will be sold during the Bred Heifer Sale. Please do not breed too early!

All animals will be sold and transferred to the new owner with full payment expected at the close of the sale. Showing the heifer, after it is sold, is not allowed by the consignor – no exceptions.

- Project members interested in purchasing heifers during the Bred Heifer Sale MUST obtain approval from the Heifer Project Coordinator PRIOR to the sale.
- Project members who purchase a heifer from the Bred Heifer Sale can show that heifer in the Open Dairy Show if they are already registered to show in the Open Dairy Show.
- Project members who purchase a heifer from the Bred Heifer Sale CANNOT use the purchased heifer in any Showmanship Classes.
- It is acceptable for the buyer of a heifer to allow a project member to handle their project heifer in the Open Show, if the BUYER asks the project member.
- Project members who purchase a heifer from the sale need to ensure they can properly care for and manage a high quality, high milk producing dairy cow. They CANNOT be managed like a beef cow. Obtain expert advice before planning to purchase a heifer from the sale!

Approximate Costs for the Project

All amounts listed here are APPROXIMATE. These figures are to give you an idea of the costs associated with raising a dairy heifer for 18 months. Amounts can be higher or lower depending on many factors. Equipment and miscellaneous expenses are listed but these are widely variable depending on what you have on hand, what cost breaks you can find, and your unique situations; but they should be considered when planning for a dairy heifer. Feed is the bulk of your expense and can, again, vary widely based on many factors. Do not use these numbers as absolute figures!

We encourage everyone to investigate possible ways to reduce costs while still providing top quality care for your heifer. Remember, a 4-H project is about experiencing new things, learning new skills, making new friends, and developing young people.

Initial cost of heifer	$600
[1]Feeds	
Roughages (5,750 lbs.)	$300 (forage should be under $100/ton)
Concentrates (2,100 lbs.) 5 lb./day	$375 (grain generally runs $9/50 lb. bag)
[2]Health & Medical	$150
[3]Equipment	$100
[4]Other	$100
Approximate cost of project	$1,625.00
[5]Average sale price of heifers from 2019:	$1,350.00

[1]Cost may vary depending on breed, market prices, purchase type (bulk vs. packaged), and amount you need to feed your heifer. If your heifer requires feed this amount will change as well. This also depends on if you have grass for grazing available, you may not need to purchase as much roughage if your heifer has a full pasture to graze.

[2]These costs are based on routine management practices such as vaccinations, deworming, pregnancy check, tests, pest prevention, breeding, etc. This does not include home visits, emergencies, or sickness expenses.

[3]This is a general idea. This can vary greatly depending on what equipment you already have on hand as well as how much you end up paying for certain items and is usually a one-time expense.

[4]These costs include items not added anywhere else and can vary greatly.

[5]Price received for heifer varies depending on the condition, breeding status, and pedigree of your heifer. You can increase your chances of breaking even or making money by taking good care of your animal and getting them bred in a timely manner to a top AI sire.

Animal Health

Heifers will be vaccinated, wormed, and checked for extra teats and other health issues at Kick-Off. First year heifers will be vaccinated again at the South Carolina State Fair and second year heifers (sale heifers) will be pregnancy checked on Thursday evening before the sale. The Heifer Project Coordinator will also make visits and worm heifers during the project. All other animal health and veterinary needs and expenses of the heifers are the participants responsibility.

Please make sure that you have the contact information for a large animal veterinarian in your area prior to Kick-Off. They are animals and can become sick or injured, therefore it is important to have a working relationship with your veterinarian. It is also important for you to spend enough time with your heifer to know what is normal for her to enable you to pick up on an illness or potential problem quickly. If you have a health concern CALL YOUR VET. The Heifer Project is not responsible for replacing sick or injured heifers, nor is the project responsible for the expenses incurred because of the sickness or death of a heifer.

If you experience any problems or have concerns about or during the Dairy Heifer Project, please contact Tina Horn at (803)944-2089 or email thorn@clemson.edu.

Any questions or concerns that are brought to the Dairy Heifer Project Committee will be acted on and their decision will be final.

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