



Lynn Schmitt-McQuitty | 4-H Youth Development Program Statewide Director
2801 Second Street, Davis, CA 95618-7774
lschmittmcquitty@ucanr.edu
(530) 750-1334 | Fax (530) 756-1148

Dear 4-H Community,

Hello from the State 4-H Office, I hope this post finds you and your family safe and secure. I want to take this time to brief you on some new developments, as well as thank all of the 4-H professionals around the state working so hard to keep you and your family engaged in learning and social activities during the shelter in place mandate.

As you are all aware, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, many fairs in California are being cancelled at the discretion of their Fair Boards or due to the State of California shelter-in-place directive. This situation has raised questions relative to how 4-H members can complete their 4-H goals for the year if fairs, still exhibit competitions, livestock shows, and junior livestock auctions are cancelled.

In the event your fair is cancelled, your Fair Board will determine if alternate opportunities, such as a (virtual) junior livestock show and auction, will be put into place. If your Fair Board determines it will not provide alternate opportunities, a team of 4-H staff are exploring alternative educational activities such as virtual showmanship classes, skill-a-thons, and exhibitions for youth to participate in to demonstrate their educational accomplishments and successfully complete their goals for the year.

Due to the rigorous food and consumer safety standards set forth by the California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) for market animals which are sold at junior livestock auctions, and the time, expertise and preparation needed to meet these standards, the University of California 4-H Youth Development Program is not granting permissions for new 4-H sponsored livestock auctions to take place. This is in accordance with long-standing 4-H policy CA 4-H Policy Handbook, Chapter 7, Part V. <http://4h.ucanr.edu/Resources/Policies/Chapter7/#V>.

Recognizing opportunities such as virtual showmanship and skill-a-thons do not address the fiscal considerations or concerns associated with livestock projects, we know there is still value in youth participating in livestock projects. Participation in these projects creates opportunities for participants to enhance their skills in accepting responsibility, setting goals, develop[ing] self-discipline, self-motivation, and knowledge of the livestock industry¹, as well as [developing] responsibility, relating to others, spirit of inquiry, decision making, public speaking, maintaining records, and building self-esteem².

While finances are certainly a component in making the decision to participate in a livestock project, we encourage each 4-H family to weigh the options and make a decision that is right for them. Due to the uncertainty around fairs and livestock

programs, this could mean some 4-H members and their families opt out of participating in livestock projects at this time. Should you choose to move forward with a livestock project (later fairs) or if you have already undertaken that endeavor (earlier fairs), we encourage you to look for responsible ways to minimize any personal financial losses.

Additionally, state 4-H teams are working to make decisions about other large-scale events that take place on an annual basis. The decision to hold the State 4-H Field Day virtually has already been made: <https://ucanr.edu/sites/sfd/> and decisions about summer camps, California 4-H Focus and State Leadership Conference will come forth in the weeks to come.

Finally, the cancellation, postponement or mandate to only meet virtually has been extended for UC ANR and the 4-H Youth Development Program through April 30. We continue to monitor the statewide and local restrictions on gatherings and consult with UC ANR leaders and will provide updates as conditions change. I realize this has challenged many of us to re-think how we continue to meet the educational needs and support the 4-H community, I want to applaud you all for meeting this challenge. The number of social media posts on 4-H have been a pleasure to read and share. The ways you are embracing technology to stay connected, educate and provide opportunities for members to lead and grow has been amazing.

In grateful appreciation,



Lynn Schmitt-McQuitty
State 4-H Director

1. Boleman, C.T. & Cummings, S.R. & Briers, G.E.. (2004). Parents' perceptions of life skills gained by youth participating in the 4-H beef project. *Journal of Extension* [On-line], 42(5). Available at: <https://www.joe.org/joe/2004october/rb6.php>
2. Ward, C. K. (1996). Life skill development related to participation in 4-H animal science projects. *Journal of Extension* [On-line], 34(2). Available at: <http://www.joe.org/joe/1996april/rb2.html>