

## **Alabama 4-H Events General Policy** **Updated September 2009**

The purpose of 4-H is to assist youth in realizing their potential and to help them develop a positive self image. Through learning by doing, 4-H builds confidence and a feeling of accomplishment.

Alabama 4-H recognizes the total achievement of youth: Project Work, Leadership, and Community Service. All three components are *equally valuable*. Contests are only one small aspect of 4-H Project Work. Other elements of Project Work include such things as individual learning activities and attendance at workshops and special events.

There are 4-H program areas that have rules that are specific to that knowledge base and competition criteria. Those rules can be found at the following web sites:

- 4-H Animal Science (Beef, Goats, Sheep, Horse, Dairy)  
<http://www.aces.edu/~ebertra/>
- 4-H Natural Resources (Forestry, Wildlife, Shooting Sports)  
<http://www.aces.edu/fourh/programs/nree-new.php>
- 4-H Sci-Tech Challenge (Innovation Station, Robotics, Rocketry)  
<http://www.aces.edu/fourh/programs/set.php>

Additionally, there are counties and regions that pilot new and innovative projects each year. Please check with the County Extension office or the 4-H REA if you have an idea for a new program or project.

### **The Alabama 4-H Club Year and Age Eligibility**

The Alabama 4-H Club Year will begin on August 1 and will end on July 31.

4-H events are open to active members of a chartered Alabama 4-H club that has experiential learning in regularly scheduled and planned meetings.

Age eligibility is determined by how old the youth is prior to January 1 of the Alabama 4-H Club Year. To be eligible for 4-H the youth must be 9 years old. They can be no older than 18 on December 31 of the Alabama 4-H Club Year.

Checking the [Alabama 4-H Age and Eligibility Chart for 2009-2010 4-H Club Year](http://www.aces.edu/fourh/docs/programs/Eligibility_Chart.pdf) will help families, volunteers and staff to determine the divisions of 4-H Membership.  
[http://www.aces.edu/fourh/docs/programs/Eligibility\\_Chart.pdf](http://www.aces.edu/fourh/docs/programs/Eligibility_Chart.pdf)

## **Club Membership and County Lines Guidelines (4/13/09)**

Regardless of where an Alabama youth resides, they are welcome to establish their primary 4-H club membership in their county of residence or an adjoining county of Alabama. Membership is established annually when an enrollment form is completed and submitted to the leader of the primary 4-H club. Members enjoy the 4-H activities offered in their county of primary membership and represent this county when participating in county, regional/district and state events.

If the 4-H member has a special interest not available from their club of primary membership, they are welcome to join another club offering that special interest. Hopefully a club of that special interest exists within the same county. If so, complete another membership form and submit it to the special interest 4-H club leader. The youth is now a member of two clubs within the same county. If the special interest is not available within the county of primary membership, the member is welcome to join a special interest club in an adjoining county. This will require completing another membership form and submitting it to the special interest 4-H club leader. The youth is now a member of two clubs in two different counties. The youth will have an enrollment record in each county's database. All 4-H, except for the area of special interest, should be conducted through the county where primary membership is established. Although dual membership between counties is allowed, dual membership between states is not allowed. A 4-H member can participate in a given project area in only one club/county.

Club Charters: The above policy for club membership and county lines will result in some chartered 4-H clubs having members from more than one county. This is especially true for community 4-H Clubs. Even so, the club will be chartered in only ONE county...the county where the 4-H club leader has been screened and trained.

If exceptions to these guidelines are needed, youth may submit a request in writing to the Associate Director, 4-H Youth Development. Examples of exceptions might include an out-of-state resident desiring membership in Alabama 4-H, a special circumstance needed to accommodate custodial and non-custodial parents, or a situation where a non-adjoining county is in close proximity.

## **The Role of Contests**

Contests are a celebration of what the young person has learned and the skills he or she has developed.

Contests, along with every other aspect of Alabama 4-H, are designed to support the four *Essential Elements of Youth Development*:

### **Belonging**

- 4-H provides a positive relationship with a caring adult.
- 4-H provides an environment where everyone feels included.
- 4-H provides a safe environment.

### **Mastery**

- Youth are involved in the learning process.
- Youth have an opportunity to master skills.

### **Independence**

- Youth have an opportunity to feel that they have control over their future.
- Youth have an opportunity to pursue their own interests and abilities.

### **Generosity**

- Youth have an opportunity to value and practice service for others.

## **The Role of Recognition**

Recognition is a strategy to help youth become more capable and competent. Its only purpose is to inspire and encourage learning. Recognition supports learning by saluting each person's effort and positively reinforcing continued participation in learning.

**National 4-H Recognition Model** includes five types of recognition. It is important to provide appropriate recognition to all participants.

- Recognition for *participation* in educational experiences builds a positive self-concept.
- Recognition of *progress toward personal goals* helps teach goal-setting and self-assessment.
- Recognition of *achievement* recognizes *standards of excellence* and provides a set target for learning experience.
- Recognition through *peer competition* is a strong motivation for some but not all young people. It is not appropriate for youth under age nine.
- Recognition for *cooperation* teaches teamwork and prepares youth for our global society.

A comprehensive recognition program can lead to more youth being recognized and can provide a way to say to every youth: "You are a valued and important member of the 4-H program."

## **Ribbon System**

Alabama 4-H draws from many approaches in awarding ribbons. Local, County, Regional and Area events will establish awarding of ribbons for events and activities.

Review the information for **Animal Science, Natural Resources and Science and Technology** for awards and recognition for individual and team events. The web addresses are found on page one of the Alabama 4-H Events General Policy.

**Alabama 4-H Competitive Events** (state level), ribbons will be presented in the following manner:

- Ribbons will be awarded to 50% of the participants in a contest using ordinal rankings up to a tenth place ranking.
- All other participants will receive a green ribbon.

Example One: If there are 10 participants, first place will receive the Alabama State Trophy and a first place ribbon; placing ribbons will be awarded for the next four ranked participants for placing of second through fifth. The other five participants will receive honorable mention ribbons.

Example Two: If there are 5 participants, three will receive rankings with others receiving honorable mention.

Example Three: If there are only three participants, they will be ranked first, second and third.

NOTE: Teams will receive one trophy. Additional trophies may be purchased.

## **Judging**

The purpose of judging is to provide young people with an evaluation of their work and suggestions for improvement. The primary purpose is to determine what is best not who is best.

### **Interview Judging or Score Sheets**

It is important that all participants get some feedback. This may come through the use of a score sheet or interaction with the judges. “Interview judging,” in which the participant and the judges discuss the work, is the most desired method of helping youth evaluate their experiences and growth.

#### **Key Points:**

- Judges’ decisions are final.
- Score sheets will be handed to the youth at the end of the event or after the awards are presented.
- Only the participating youth may raise questions or concerns about their placement or scoring.
- Judges may wish to speak with the gathered participants in general terms about the distinguishing characteristics of the top entrees.
- All events will seek to have two or three judges who have been appropriately trained.

## **Repeat Winners**

Review the information for **Animal Science, Natural Resources and Science and Technology** for repeat winners for individual and team events. The web addresses are found on page one of the Alabama 4-H Events General Policy.

**Alabama 4-H Competitive Events**, at the state level, first place winners cannot participate in the same contest in the same age level. A first place winner in Senior Level I may compete in Senior Level II when eligible.

The exception will be in Freestyle Demonstration and Freestyle Showcase. The subject of the presentation must be different, for example: natural resources one year and consumer science another year.

Eligibility for participation in Junior Level contests is set by local, county, regional and area planning committee.

## **Team and Individual Entries**

Review the information for **Animal Science, Natural Resources and Science and Technology** for individual and team entries. The web addresses are found on page one of the Alabama 4-H Events General Policy.

**Alabama 4-H Competitive Events**, at the state level, individual entries will continue in chicken-que, lawn tractor, photography and public speaking.

All other contests allow both team and individual entries. Teams and individuals are judged concurrently, using the same criteria with no advantage or disadvantage on scoring. With this option, youth may choose whether they wish to work alone or with others, developing different skills and abilities. Because of their interests and personalities, some young people may choose the individual approach while others may wish to be on a team.

The team approach allows young people to develop a different set of communications, planning, and leadership skills which reflect the “teamwork” emphasis generally found in the organizational setting. The opportunity to be on a team encourages many young people who would not otherwise be interested in participating.

Teams must be in the same age levels for entry and participation.

Eligibility for participation in Junior Level contests is set by local, county, regional and area planning committee

## **Identification of Participants**

Review the information for **Animal Science, Natural Resources and Science and Technology** for identification of participants. The web addresses are found on page one of the Alabama 4-H Events General Policy.

In **Alabama 4-H Competitive Events**, all participants in all contests will identify the entry with name, county and level of participation. This may be done using the 4-H Exhibit signs for exhibits or at the beginning of demonstrations and speeches, when being interviewed or scored in skill events.

## **Risk Management, Art Release, Community Service And other forms as designated**

Review the information for **Animal Science, Natural Resources and Science and Technology** for required registration and other forms. The web addresses are found on page one of the Alabama 4-H Events General Policy.

In **Alabama 4-H Competitive Events**, participants entering projects must submit forms with registration to the designated person. A copy of the form must be with the participant the day of the contest. All forms are available on line with contest rules.

## **Disqualifications and Deductions**

Review the information for **Animal Science, Natural Resources and Science and Technology** for disqualification and deduction information. The web addresses are found on page one of the Alabama 4-H Events General Policy.

In **Alabama 4-H Competitive Events**, rules are developed for all contests so that entries can be as equal as possible for each participant at the beginning of the contest.

**Disqualifications** are in information for each contest. The facilitators are responsible for administering the rules at the lowest level of participation.....local/county level or when the disqualification is discovered.

**Deductions** are noted on score sheets for time infractions or other infractions. These are not considered disqualifications.

## **Parents' and Volunteers' Guide**

All 4-H projects are for young people. In the spirit of fair and honorable competition, it is expected that the young person takes full ownership for every aspect of the project. The

role of the adult helper is to support and encourage youth in their efforts, to ask and answer questions about the project, and to help youth learn specific techniques that they might use in their project.

## Event Selection and State Competition

Review the information for **Animal Science, Natural Resources and Science and Technology** for individual and team entries. The web addresses are found on page one of the Alabama 4-H Events General Policy.

When entering **Alabama 4-H Competitive Events**, a young person may only compete in one event at regional/area and state competition, because of contest scheduling. Each county may register one Senior Level I and one Senior Level II individual in each event that is offered. Guidelines for state level competition must be followed. There will be some events that may have “round-robin” eliminations before the final winners are announced.

## Other Information About 4-H

For information about the Alabama 4-H program, check the web site [www.Alabama4H.com](http://www.Alabama4H.com). Updates for all events will be continually posted during the year. Please check the headers on the version that is printed to be sure that you have the most recent revision. Corrections are made as they are found within the system. These will be posted in a color font in order to be easily recognized.



**Operation Military Kid:** All 4-H projects and events are open to OMK youth. For more information about joining a 4-H Club check [www.Alabama4H.com](http://www.Alabama4H.com). Four competitive events fit OMK: Chef 4-H, Speak-Up Alabama, The World I See, Have I Got a Story! For anyone who is in OMK these projects would be an ideal way to share your experience. Choose from the cultural and heritage that your family has experienced. This can be in another state or on the other side of the world. Tell your story in an interesting and fun way. If you need suggestions, please contact the OMK Coordinator, Charlene Hines, 334-844-2294.

**Junior Master Gardener:** JMG® offers horticultural/environmental science education and leadership and life skill development through fun and creative activities. The program incorporates service learning and volunteerism enabling young people to make a positive contribution to their home, community, and country. For more information contact, Luci Davis, State JMG Coordinator, 334-703-7509.

