

Hello Everyone,

Below is information relevant to the PA FFA Dairy Evaluation and Management Contest for 2026.

This email is a reminder of the information available on the PA FFA Website and the old exams and team activity to use with your students for preparation.

Unfortunately, the rules from 2025 are still listed on the state website. We will include the updated rules with these resources.

As Nationals continues to change and tweak the contest, we are trying to stay as consistent as possible. We want to provide as much clarifying information as possible.

First – Use the materials on the PA FFA Website as your primary references. Use the National FFA information as supplemental resources.

### **Tuesday – Consists of the Individual Practicums and Team Presentations on Campus.**

- Students will need to be in official dress with pencils and calculators.
- ALL STUDENTS will complete the individual practicums.
  - o The rules say 60 minutes to complete the practicums. If a student needs a few extra minutes because of reading comprehension / math skills, it is okay.
  
- **THERE IS NO LONGER A GENERAL KNOWLEDGE EXAM.**
  
- The individual practicums will be paper-pencil problems and give students information to interpret. Answers will be specific numbers or multiple-choice questions (no open-ended questions). Each practicum is worth 40 points.
- The practicum topics for 2026. are: Herd Record Activity, Heifer/Calf Management and Milking Equipment/Quality.
  - o To help guide you in the right direction, we are releasing two of the practicum problems from last year.
  - o Descriptions of Practicums from National FFA:
    - **Herd Record Activity:** Herd Record activities will support informed decision-making in dairy herd management. These include the systematic recording and analysis of data related to the health, productivity, and management of the herd, such as identification, health records, production records, breeding records, and growth records.
    - **Calf and Heifer Management Activity:** Calf and Heifer Management Activities focus on young animals' health, nutrition, and development. These activities aim to ensure the successful development of productive replacement animals and contribute to dairy farms' overall efficiency and profitability. Potential topics may include birth and newborn care, feeding and nutrition, growth and development, housing, and disease prevention.
    - **Milking Equipment and Quality Activity:** Milking Equipment and Quality Activities analyze the efficiency and quality of milk production by selecting the appropriate equipment to maintain high hygiene standards. This may include selection and monitoring of milking machines, sanitation supplies, storage and cooling systems, milking parlor design, and California Mastitis Test analysis.

- **The team presentation topic for 2026 is Genetics and Reproduction.** Remember other information may be included, check out the National FFA Website for more details on the team activity.
  - o Only full teams of four students will complete the team activity. Please make sure if your school entered more than four students, the students know which four will make up the team.
  - o Teams will have 40 minutes to review the information and prepare a 10-minute presentation for a panel of judges.
    - Review the judging rubrics with your teams before the contest. Each year the judges mention that many teams lose points because they forgot an introduction or conclusion.

### Wednesday - Judging and Reasons

- We are outside at the PSU Dairy Barns to judge the five classes and give two sets of reasons. We typically have two heifer classes and three cow classes, depending on availability of animals.
- **Students will need closed toed shoes (sneakers, boots, etc.) and regular school clothes. Hats, sunglasses and sunscreen are encouraged.** No one wants a miserably sunburnt student for convention.
  - o Students will need a clipboard and blank paper or a blank notebook to write down their reasons. They cannot bring any templates or terminology sheets to the contest.
- We place all five classes of animals first, then give reasons.
  - o Encourage your students to memorize their reasons. **THEY WILL LOSE POINTS** if they read from their notes.
- After students are finished with reasons, they will be able to eat their boxed lunches at the barns.

Please share this information with any additional teachers or coaches who work with your teams.

If you have additional questions, please reach out.

Robyn Bechtel

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