Incorporating Animal Science Knowledge and Life Skills

Looking for new ways to get kids excited about their animal projects other than preparing for shows and fairs? Have you thought about working with youth on a livestock skillathon or quiz bowl? These are some of the areas added in recent years that expand the focus of animal science projects beyond traditional exhibition of animals and bring a renewed focus to life skill development and animal science knowledge.

The Livestock Skillathon will be a new contest at PASE in 2007. Even though the state contest is for 12-18 year olds, there are many activities that can be done to involve all ages. This will be a team event with “stations” where youth work together to complete activities such as livestock breeds identification, feeds identification and feeding problems such as calculating average daily gains.

Other activities may include judging retail meats, a quality assurance exercise such as taking a lamb’s temperature, and an evaluation and marketing to determine yield and quality grade of a market steer, along with the most profitable way to market the animal. Resources for activities include the Livestock Learning Lab kits that are available in most county Extension offices. These kits include activities for breed ID, retail meat cuts and more. Example problems and other resources will be posted on the PASE website (http://pase.unl.edu/) beginning in March.

The livestock quiz bowl has been popular at PASE for a number of years. Fun “mock” quiz bowl contests can be held at club meetings to help members learn the basics of livestock parts, types of feeds, meat cuts and more. While the example questions available on the PASE website are designed for older youth, simple questions such as “Name the area of a beef animal that is the top of the head” can be written for younger groups. Involving high school aged youth in writing and asking the questions can involve the whole club. Many counties have quiz bowl units with the buzzers available for checkout, but even without that, a simple kitchen timer and some type of bells for the kids to ring can make for a fun activity.
Take a healthy bite of fun with the new curriculum for youth and families! Research-based, Youth in Motion is sure to stir up activity and education! Each lesson is filled with fun, hands-on activities while building important life skills such as goal setting, problem solving, decision making and critical thinking, custom-tailored to include information on the new Dietary Guidelines and MyPyramid.

Learning objectives for Youth in Motion focus on a complete fitness picture for youth and/or families. This includes: 1). Learn about taking a working and resting heart rate; 2). Personal goal setting; 3). Stretching and building stronger muscles; and 4. Choosing healthy snacks. The Youth in Motion program was built on the success of a well-researched mentoring program entitled Red in Motion (RIM), which had the goal of promoting lifelong physical activity and healthy eating among school age children. After one year of field testing, a non-randomized controlled research study showed significant improvement in children’s eating habits and physical activity levels.

There are lots of fun things to do in Youth in Motion as projects or exhibit ideas. Incorporate some of the following exhibits into your club activities!

**CLASS 1** Youth in Motion Poster, Scrapbook, or Photo Display about the 4-H’ers family or self involved in a physical activity or concept/lesson involving this project. This might contain pictures, captions, and/or reports about the physical activity the individual or family did as a result of taking this project.

**CLASS 2** Activity Bag – A duffle bag or backpack that the 4-H’er packs so that they are always prepared to be active and make healthy food choices. May include proper workout attire, a healthy beverage or snack, a notebook or goal sheet, etc. Make sure all items are clean, clearly labeled and an explanation of why it is included in the Activity Bag. DO NOT put valuable items (i.e. electronics) in Activity Bag, instead use a picture of the item or include in the listing of items.

**CLASS 3** Youth in Motion Healthy Snack Recipe File - Collection of 10 recipes from any source. Each recipe must accompany a complete snack menu in which the recipe is used, following the idea that a healthy snack includes foods from at least two different food groups. An additional 10 recipes may be added each year 4-H’er is in project, with year clearly marked on recipes. Consider creativity and neatness. Display in recipe file or box or in a clear plastic binder.

**CLASS 4** Exercise Interview – Interview someone in your life that you have chosen to be active with or someone that you admire that is physically active. Why do they enjoy their exercise program? What are their goals? Why do you admire them? Maximum of two pages, one sided write up of an interview with someone who has an active exercise program. Consider creativity and neatness. Mount on colored paper or poster board, or display in clear plastic binder. Include a picture of the person interviewed. (May be laminated to preserve exhibit.) Overall size of mounted exhibit should be no larger than 9 X 12 inches.

**CLASS 5** Healthy Snack – see ideas for non-perishable snacks on pg 36. Four cookies, bars, muffins, etc., on a paper plate, or at least 1 cup of mix. (examples might include: granola bars, homemade crackers or chips,) Supporting information to include recipe and snack menu, and why this snack menu might be considered a health snack.
Did you see all the gorgeous 4-H quilts at the State Fair? In case you missed them, they were on second floor of the Old Youth Complex (4-H Building), in the northeast corner. They were wonderful. Congratulations to all the 4-H’ers who made them and gained all those wonderful new quilting skills. The Nebraska Quilter’s Guild provided cash awards for the top entries in each class. These awards are much appreciated.

What’s a Quilt Label? It is important that future generations know who made your quilt. So put a permanent label on the back of your quilt, listing your name, the year, and any other information you would like to include. You can make your label from plain cotton fabric, and can write on it with a pigma pen, available in fabric stores. Or you can embroidery the label. Stitch the label to the back with tiny stitches. It should be on the lower right hand side, as you are facing the back of the quilt. You’re making history!

What is a Level I Quilt? The fairbook describes Level I quilts as being made up of squares and rectangles. Because triangles and curved seams add greatly to the difficulty of a quilt design, Level I helps 4-H’ers not get in over their head. There are hundreds of patterns that include just squares and rectangles. Look for some of these designs made up of squares and rectangles when searching for a pattern you want to use – 9 patch, hole in the wall, log cabin, rail fence, puss in the corner, postage stamp, courthouse steps, 4 patch, brick wall, hole in the barn door, and many many more.

Does It Matter What Kind of Fabric I Choose? Yes, it does. 100% cotton will give you by far the best results. Read the label, don’t try to guess. Though some quilters do use other kinds of fabric, there are many that are extremely difficult to quilt with. Some 4-H’ers get polyester cotton blends, but keep in mind that a main characteristic of polyester is its ability to pop back. That’s fine for clothes, but for quilts it means your blocks don’t hold their shape, either before or after sewing.

Shall I Press My Seams Open? No. Quilt seams are pressed to one side. This is often towards the outside edge of the block. In some situations you may press towards the darker color. Seams that are pressed open are for garment sewing. If quilt seams are pressed open, the batting may come right up between the stitches after your quilt is finished.

What’s a Premier Quilt? A premier quilt is one that is done entirely by the 4-H’er. It must be either hand or machine quilted by the 4-H’er. Quilts in other classes may be either hand or machine quilted by someone else. Tied quilts go in other classes, since the premier quilt must be quilted.
Fun Meeting Ideas

New Year’s Resolution
Put on party hats, take a notebook with tabbed index dividers and have each member do a collage on an index page with their name in the tab!! Decorate the front of the notebook with your club name. Talk about New Year Resolutions and have a resolution sheet for each member to fill out listing the projects they will take this year, life skills they will learn, how it might tie into a future career, related community service ideas and action steps they will take to achieve their goal. Give them a copy to refer to and keep the original in the Resolution Notebook behind their collage; all this brainstorming will likely result in several ideas for future meetings!! Serve a healthy snack, play noisemakers and share ideas!!

Weather Watch
Anytime is a good time to watch and talk about the weather, especially in Nebraska!! Invite a meteorologist to speak to your club, share their career decision and what steps they took to attain their goal. You could visit your area television station for a fun field trip!! This versatile topic can segue into a study of Environmental Education & Earth Sciences or Plant Science and the growing season. Tailor it to fit your club!! Have a sleepover, drink hot cider, watch out the window for weather changes and see moonlit clouds move across the sky at night!!

Spring into Action
This season lends itself to many ideas. Celebrate World Health Day (April 7th) by studying MyPyramid in Food and Nutrition. Make fresh, delicious snacks during your meeting or kick start a Healthy Lifestyles program by having a Progressive Dinner featuring healthy dishes with stops at each member’s house!! April 24th is the beginning of National Playground Safety Week so have the club volunteer to clean, sweep or rake a playground area to get it ready for children and warm weather fun!!

Stop and Smell the Roses
Don’t run through the fun of summer without stopping to smell the roses in September!! Projects were finished and entered in the county fair and now state fair is over. Stop, gather your thoughts and have the members write an ending to their Resolution page which could also serve as the 4-H story for their Career Portfolio!! Celebrate with a club picnic and submit the stories to the local newspaper. Ask that they print during the first week of October for National 4-H Week!! Leaders can also contribute a story about the fun you’ve had and what has been accomplished and learned!!
Electronic identification (EID) for livestock began to develop in the early 1970’s and increased with the establishment of the National Animal Identification System in 1994. This voluntary national identification system for livestock is administered by the USDA and implemented by state government, such as Nebraska.

Nebraska Department of Agriculture and UNL have an agreement to implement standards set by the State of Nebraska, this includes the 4-H system across the state.

EID systems used before 1994 were used by dairies to monitor feed consumption, used by the USDA Agricultural Research Service in field trials and used by owners of expensive animals to track animal in cases of loss or theft.

Events in the world generated interest by the United States Congress to develop a national animal identification system. Some of these influencing factors were:

- Livestock producers were lobbying for a country-of-origin labeling (COOL).
- Livestock-carried diseases broke out in the world putting livestock and/or people at risk including Foot and Mouth Disease, West Nile Virus, Exotic Newcastle Disease, and Anthrax.
- Tainted meat was shipped to Burger King and Wendy’s resulting in E. Coliform poisoning of customers.
- Cattle from Canada had Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (“mad cow disease”) which MAY stimulate Crutchfield-Jacobs Disease, a disabling nervous condition in humans.
- Acts of terrorism generated an enhanced awareness for a secure food source and production system.

The USDA EID contains 15 numbers that included the nation, the premise of production and the individual animal number and can be attached to a wide variety of front tags including traditional stock tags and scanned by a reader.

The NAIS Electronic ID program ([www.usda.gov/nais](http://www.usda.gov/nais)) is managed under the Nebraska Department of Agriculture's “Locate in 48” program ([www.LocateIn48.com](http://www.LocateIn48.com)) will register “premises” (including farms, ranches, vet clinics, fairs, feedlots, and sale yards) followed by having owners tag individual animals.

Cattle were the first, but they will be followed by bison, horse, swine, sheep, goats, poultry, elk & deer, llamas & Alpacas, and then aquaculture (fish).
Volunteer R&R in Norfolk, Feb. 24

A Volunteer R&R (Retool & Refuel) will be held Saturday, Feb. 24, 9:30 a.m.–3 p.m. at the University of Nebraska–Lincoln Northeast Research and Extension Center in Norfolk. The focus will be youth development, healthy lifestyles and family and consumer sciences. Each participant will be able to attend four workshops of their choice and receive hands-on ideas.

Registration for the training is $30 and is due by Feb. 9. Lancaster County 4-H Council will reimburse all Lancaster County 4-H leaders who attend the Volunteer R&R training. The fee includes four workshops and lunch. A detailed program and registration information is available at http://4h.unl.edu or contact Tracy at 441-7180 for more information.

University of Nebraska-Lincoln Extension