

# 4-H/FFA REPLACEMENT BEEF HEIFER DEVELOPMENT CONTEST

## Objective

4-H & FFA livestock projects have been one of the most successful activities at teaching youth and their family about responsibility and care for their livestock. The objective of the Replacement Heifer Development Contest is to recognize those 4-H & FFA exhibitors that have a true passion for raising beef cattle. This is a twelve (12) month contest where the contestant would be personally responsible for the daily management of their heifers. In establishing this heifer development contest, it is anticipated that the participants and adults around the state will learn proper heifer development practices and procedures. The contest is designed to encourage young beef producers to participate in a practical beef heifer development program.

## Design of Contest

The 4-H & FFA Heifer Development Contest is a twelve (12) month project. It will start on September 1, 2008 and conclude on August 1, 2009. An entry form is required prior to September 1 and all records must be received by August 14, 2009. All forms and records will be submitted to Dr. Dean Jousan, Extension 4-H Livestock Specialist. The location(s) of the contest will be determined and announced at a later date. The contests will likely be held on August 22 and/or August 29, 2009 (based on number of entries).

4-H & FFA members must be individual entrants to the contest unless two (2) or more brothers or sisters, each at least 14 years of age but not over 18 years of age as of January 1 of the current year in which the contest begins, of a family constitute a joint entry. ***If the entrant is in college, he/she must personally manage and care for their heifers on a daily basis by commuting from home to school. It is not permissible to have someone else care for the heifers while away at school.***

The heifer development project must consist of three (3) heifers (purebred or commercial) that are either fall born from the previous year or spring born of the current year in which the contest begins. While not mandatory, the heifers can be exhibited in junior shows. Heifers can be purchased from a purebred or commercial producer or be selected from family operations of an immediate family member (parent, stepparent, brother, sister, half-brother, half-sister, grandparent or legal guardian). *NOTE: If registered or commercial beef heifers are used in the project and are to be shown at the Mississippi State Fair or District and Dixie National Junior Round-Up Livestock Shows, the ownership rules and regulations as printed in those premium books will still apply.*

This contest is designed to evaluate the youth producer's ability to manage the heifers rather than the genetic selection of the heifers. Therefore, participants using purebred and commercial heifers will be judged together without preference given to breed or breed type.

Contestants will be judged on all managerial aspects of their heifer development project. Youth can take advantage of FSA farm loans totaling \$5,000. Participants will be encouraged to take advantage of Extension agents, advisors and experienced producers in selecting quality heifers and discussing production cost.

### **Evaluation System**

By September 1, 2008, an entry form must be submitted to the Extension 4-H Livestock Specialist. This will determine the number of contestants and create a record of preliminary information about heifers selected for this project. Initial criteria to be included on the entry form would include the animals' age, weight, breed, and starting value (purchase price) for each animal. In addition, each entrant should submit their goals for the project. If registered heifers are used, the entry should include a photocopy of that animal(s) registration paper.

Potential heifers to be chosen for the contest should be born in the fall of 2007 or the spring of 2008. Any heifer with a sign of 3-year old teeth will be eliminated at the contest site, regardless of a registered or printed birth date for that heifer.

In order to verify that the three (3) animals entered in the contest are the same three (3) brought to the contest site, electronic identification (EID) tags will be inserted in each heifer's ear by an Area Livestock Agent. An alternative to using an EID tag would be for the Area Livestock Agent to check an ear tattoo for registered beef heifers to match the tattoo on that heifer's registration paper. When the heifers arrive to the contest site, the EID tag and/or ear tattoo will be checked to confirm that the heifer is the one entered in the contest. Information about how to acquire an EID tag will be sent at a later date.

Since the project concludes on August 1, 2009, all participants must submit a set of records prior to evaluation of the heifers. These records must be received by the Extension 4-H Livestock Specialist no later than August 14, 2009. Records could be kept in a spreadsheet, notebook or other system that is decided upon by the exhibitor(s). Specific records that should be kept throughout the year and submitted can be found in the Records section below.

**All three (3) heifers entered in the contest must be taken to the contest site for final judging. No heifer may be substituted during the contest. In**

**addition, no heifer should be removed from the contest without prior approval from designated Area Livestock Agents or Extension Specialists.**

The 4-H & FFA Heifer Development Contest will be made up of 3 components: a visual appraisal of the heifers, a record keeping system and an interview process.

- **Visual Evaluation:** A committee of judges will evaluate each group of three (3) heifers managed by the contestant. Criteria that will be evaluated include weight, frame score, growth, body condition score, health, structural/skeletal soundness and reproductive ultrasound evaluation. In addition, each entrant will be judged on their salesmanship skills and overall knowledge of phenotypic characteristics of their heifers. *This component of the contest will be worth 20%.*
- **Records:** Youth will be required to submit records kept throughout the entire twelve (12) month project. At the start of the project, contestants will be asked to list short- and long-term goals for their heifer project. In addition, during each month of the project, the contestant should record anything that was done to his/her heifers. Examples would include recording the amount of feed, hay or other nutritional supplements purchased or fed, veterinarian expenses and other health-related costs, breeding decisions, rotational grazing of pastures, a complete budget/expense sheets and any other management issue in which the youth had to make a decision for the continued development of his/her heifers. At the conclusion of the project, youth should address whether or not they were able to achieve the goals that they set at the start of the project. These records will be judged on their completeness and exactness during the contest year. *This component of the contest will be worth 30%.*
- **Interview:** A committee of judges will interview the exhibitor on their individual production practices. The exhibitor will give a 10-15 minute presentation (can use PowerPoint or other visuals) to summarize his/her heifer development project. This presentation can include anything relevant to the contestant's project (goals for project and if they were accomplished, pictures to illustrate the project, etc). Each exhibitor will then answer questions from the committee in regard to their project, such as the process used to select the heifers, record keeping system used, nutrition program, bull used for breeding purposes, health records and any production practices utilized by the exhibitor during this contest. *This component of the contest will be worth 50%.*

The criteria that will make up each category will be determined by a committee of individuals including, but not limited to, area livestock agents, cattle producers, and extension specialists and cattle association members. All ties would be broken using the interview score followed by the record book. The committee of judges for the

contest would include the same type of individuals mentioned in this paragraph within Mississippi or in nearby states.

## **Educational Sessions**

Several presentations will be given to help with various aspects of this contest. A workshop will be given during State 4-H Club Congress on replacement heifer selection and general health care practices. This presentation will also be presented on video to educate young people on these topics. Additional videos will be made to support the project as needed.

## **Awards**

Types of awards will be announced at a later date. At this time, awards will be given to the top five (5) placing individuals/teams of this contest. The overall top individual/team will receive a livestock trailer sponsored by Robert Strickland with S & S Trailer Sales, Newton, MS. In addition, the 1<sup>st</sup> place winner will give their presentation at the 2010 MCA Annual Convention held in Jackson. Prizes and awards for the remaining top five (5) individuals/teams will be determined soon.

The past overall winning individual/team cannot compete in any future 4-H/FFA Replacement Heifer Development Contests. However, if a team of siblings competes, they can declare one (1) person on that team to receive the awards associated with their final placing. This designation must be made by final record submission or at check-in of the heifers at the contest site.

To fund this project, sponsorship would be sought from industry, county cattlemen's associations, breed associations and individuals recognizing the value and importance of this contest.

***Your tax-deductible donation can be made to the Cattlemen's Foundation and earmarked for the Heifer Development Project.***

*Disclaimer: Awards and prizes are subject to change without prior notice.*

## **Importance of Project**

This contest should provide an authentic experience for youth that choose to participate in this contest. Not only will youth learn valuable information that they can use for a lifetime, but the cattle industry can benefit as young cattlemen and cattlemen will be educated producers in the future. These youth can be a positive influence on their own family's cattle production system and share their insights with other cattle producers around the state, causing adults to think more about their own management decisions too.