



Illinois 4-H Transitions to Virtual 4-H Shows for Summer 2020

Frequently Asked Questions

University of Illinois Extension continues to follow the guidance of the Illinois Department of Public Health and the University of Illinois to ensure the health and safety of staff, volunteers, and program participants. For future events, including summer Illinois 4-H shows and exhibitions, the organization has established a phased decision-making and communication timeline.

As the youth development program of Illinois Extension, 4-H activities abide by the guidelines of Illinois Extension, University of Illinois, and the State of Illinois. The following information relates to annual 4-H shows and exhibitions.

What is the timeline for decisions about 4-H summer shows and exhibitions?

- **May 4:** Illinois Extension announces that all in-person events scheduled through July 5 will be canceled, postponed, or transitioned online.
- **May 4:** Online 4-H exhibition platform, FairEntry, announced to support Illinois 4-H shows and exhibits. This virtual exhibition platform will be the contingency option available for all summer 4-H shows that are not able to host in-person events.
- **June 1:** decision shared regarding July 6 – July 31 events.
- **July 1:** decision shared regarding August 1-15 events.
- **July 15:** decision shared regarding August 16-31 events.
- **August 1:** decision shared regarding September 1-30 events.

Does this timeline apply to 4-H club meetings?

Yes, 4-H clubs must abide by the same rules as all Illinois Extension programs.

What projects will be eligible for virtual exhibition?

All 4-H general project and 4-H livestock projects may be transitioned to the virtual platform, during the dates that it's not possible for the event to take place in-person.

What exactly is canceled, and what is still uncertain?

Illinois 4-H has not cancelled any 4-H shows or exhibits, but will transition these events to our online platform, FairEntry, when necessary to provide our 4-H members an opportunity to participate in an evaluation experience with an expert judge in their project area.

County fairs operate independent of each other and of Illinois 4-H. Check with your local county fair for more information about the current status of your local county fair. Illinois Extension and Illinois 4-H is proud to participate in many local fairs and will support these fairs to the best of our ability.

If our 4-H judging event was originally scheduled for June, can't we just postpone or reschedule?

4-H staff organize and implement nearly 100 judging events across the summer. Because of the planning time and resources involved in each of these events, we are not able to postpone and stack all events for a later time in the summer. It is also uncertain at this time when large group gatherings will be allowed according to public health guidelines. For those reasons, all 4-H exhibition events planned through July 5 will all be moved to the online platform.

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My child is in their final year of 4-H eligibility. Will they qualify for an extension of 4-H eligibility this year?

Another year of age eligibility will not be granted. Given that many state and national events are being canceled in 2020, there have been conversations around adding an extra year of eligibility for 4-H members. After a period of discussion and public input, the final recommendation from national 4-H committees is that all 4-H national and multi-state events will follow existing age requirements. Because these are valued culminating experiences, we are providing an online judging experience so that all 4-H members will continue to have this opportunity. We encourage youth in their final year of eligibility to participate in the online experience.

Why did 4-H start moving summer shows online when the governor's executive order only reaches through May 30?

Illinois Extension needed to provide a framework for 4-H staff and volunteers to move forward with planning events. In many locations, 4-H staff are already facing host facility cancellations, volunteer recruitment challenges, and logistical hurdles related to concerns about the safety of large group gatherings.

Why isn't a decision being made for the whole summer? If some events are moving to an online format, shouldn't they all?

We remain committed to pacing our decision-making process in coordination with available data needed to make those tough choices. While we feel confident that we have sufficient data to make a decision about June events, we recognize that this is a quickly evolving situation and that conditions may be different for July, August and September. We are making those decisions in consultation with our partner organizations, stakeholders, university leadership, and program participants.

We do not have reliable access to high speed internet, smartphones, or a computer. Will we be able to participate in the online experience?

We have chosen an online platform that requires the least bandwidth and can be accessed by either a smartphone on a data plan with access to a browser or a laptop connected to the internet. For families who do not have access to any technology, we will do our best to identify solutions to ensure that all 4-H members who want to participate in the online exhibitions can. These are not guaranteed and will depend on when we are able to safely return to county Illinois Extension offices across the state. Visit the [Illinois Extension website](#) to find a list of our local offices, their contact information, and their websites, which is where we'll post announcements about when we'll be returning to our office locations.

What kinds of videography, photography, audio, and other software or equipment do we need to compete using the online platform?

Youth can use either a smartphone with a data plan or a laptop connected to the internet to upload the documentation for their exhibit. Youth will also need access to a camera or camera phone to take photos. Refer to updated project guidelines for specific requirements related to different types of projects.

How can we prepare for the virtual competition?

Staff are developing a general tip sheet for using the system. Youth will also have some project-specific guidelines about how to properly display each project to most effectively demonstrate mastery of project skill. Illinois 4-H staff are also preparing a video orientation for online judging and it will be distributed to all 4-H members to help prepare them for this new experience.

Our county fair board plans to conduct a fair with procedures consistent with state guidelines. Will 4-H participate?

Some county fairs in June have already made a decision to cancel and others are actively weighing data to make their own decisions. We will support our valued county fair partners to the extent that we can, but as part of the University of Illinois system, we must follow campus guidelines regarding social distancing and group gatherings.

I read that the governor is considering a regional approach to lifting social distancing restrictions. If my county fair is able to proceed according to the new guidelines, will 4-H participate?

At this time, 4-H is only making a decision about in-person events planned through July 5. We are operating as if in-person events scheduled for July, August and September will happen as planned.

What is special about the July 5 date?

There was a natural break in the currently-scheduled 4-H shows that did not split a county 4-H show schedule. We did not want half of a county's 4-H show to fall in the canceled section and the other to fall in the allowed period.

How much lead time is required to conduct a 4-H in-person show? How much lead time is required to provide/support the online experience?

A minimum of four weeks is needed to coordinate the many variables involved in planning and preparing for a 4-H judging event. This includes recruiting judges and superintendents, onboarding all staff and volunteers, securing donors for awards, confirming facility contracts, ordering ribbons and other recognition items, and many other aspects of our 4-H judging events. This general timeline applies whether the event is online or in-person.

Will my photos and other content uploaded to the online platform be safe and secure for my child? Who will have access to those images and what happens to them after the event?

Only the assigned judge and staff will have access to the exhibit materials uploaded into FairEntry. After the event has concluded, the materials will be archived.

Will my child's name or images appear on public websites, apps, or social media?

To be eligible for award premiums through the Ag Premium Fund, all 4-H exhibits must be viewable by the public. These will be uploaded to share online after the virtual judging process has concluded. As with all in-person 4-H exhibits, the name of the exhibitor, name of 4-H club and county will be shared. No images of the 4-H youth will be included with exhibit photos or videos without confirmed parental permission.

Will the public or other participants be able to view my child's project?

Yes, all 4-H exhibits will be shared via the University of Illinois Extension website at www.extension.illinois.edu. Additional public viewing will be available through local press releases and social media.

Will my child be able to or be expected to interact with anyone other than 4-H staff and the project judge during the online experience?

No. Please remember that all 4-H staff and volunteers have been screened during the hiring process and have undergone child protection training regarding working with youth. Protocols are in place to protect your child during the online experience.

Will my child's project be eligible to qualify for state fair?

Yes. If your child's project fits in an eligible project category, they will be competing for the right to be selected as a delegate for State Fair. If the State Fair event in Springfield is cancelled, the State 4-H Office will conduct the state-level general project show in the same online platform.

Will state fair competitions be offered online too? Will it be the same online platform or a different one?

In the event that social distancing guidelines prevent large group gatherings in August, FairEntry would allow for a seamless execution of an online judging version of State 4-H General Project Show.

Will award premiums be granted to winning projects?

At this time, Illinois Department of Agriculture (IDOA) indicates that if projects have the opportunity for public viewing (online or in person), they will be eligible for premiums through IDOA. Of course, premium money is determined solely by IDOA, and there are no guarantees that premium money will be released from year to year.

What about fraud and cheating?

As with any judging experience, there are no guarantees that work done at home is done exclusively by the 4-H member, with assistance from adults when safety is crucial. We believe our 4-H members and families to be trustworthy and will provide quality evidence of their own work efforts that follows all county and state guidelines.

Will my child still have the opportunity to talk with a judge about their project as part of the online show?

Technology access was a key consideration in how we chose a platform for online judging. Exhibits in FairEntry can be uploaded by both a smartphone and laptop. No live conference will be provided, as this dramatically increases the bandwidth and access needed to participate. Exhibitors will have the opportunity to respond to short narrative questions about their project when uploading exhibit photos/videos. Feedback from the judge will be entered into the system and forwarded to individual exhibitors as a follow up to the event.

The social aspect of summer judging events is one of the main things my kids look forward to. If all judging moves online, is there any way we can provide that experience in a new way?

When the Illinois Department of Public Health feels like large group and face-to-face gatherings are safe again, the State 4-H Office will convene the 4-H Youth Development Team to brainstorm new 4-H experiences that can bring our 4-H members and their supporters together for social gathering and showcase opportunities. Examples of those that have already been suggested included: County 4-H Celebration of Youth Day with youth presentations and displays, extended project workshops with experts, additional 4-H showcase days, and jackpot or pop-up shows.