

Success Stories

Sharing the difference CSU Extension makes in people's lives and their communities.

4-H animal projects find a home

4-H programs around the state are giving young people who don't live on farms or ranches the chance to raise livestock at fairgrounds and other partner venues.

Situation

Youth who live in towns and cities seldom raise an animal as part of a 4-H market livestock project. They just don't have access to the barns, pens, and space that animals need. As a result, many middle and high school-aged youth cannot play out a talent or desire for raising livestock—whether goats, steer, sheep or swine. While they can participate in other meaningful 4-H projects, they miss out on raising an animal and developing a unique set of skills that can carry them through life. They also miss out on participating in one of 4-H's most respected and popular youth development program areas.

Extension's Response

For over a decade, CSU Extension 4-H agents around the state have helped town and city-dwelling 4-Hers raise animals at county fairgrounds, community 4-H barns, and nonprofit and private ranches. Agents have secured these opportunities by building partnerships with county government, local organizations and individuals. By 2010, at least 10 Colorado counties had established an alternate venue for youth to raise animals. Here are some examples of who is helping the youth carry out their project and what they're raising:

- Adams County: 4-Hers from neighborhoods throughout the Denver metropolitan area raise market goat, sheep and swine at The Urban Farm at Stapleton, a nonprofit agricultural center.
- Baca County: 4-Hers raise pigs, goats and steers at two small farms in Springfield and Vilas. The donated land and grant-funded barns and corrals are owned and operated by FFA.
- Douglas County: 4-Hers raise goats and sheep at the Lowell Ranch, a nonprofit agricultural education center run by the Colorado Agriculture Leadership Foundation.
- Eagle County: 4-Hers raise pigs, sheep, goats and poultry at the county fairgrounds in Eagle, or a 4-H barn located on county land near the town of Gypsum.
- Routt County: 4-Hers in Steamboat Springs raise sheep and goats at the Legacy Ranch, a city-owned property leased by Yampatika, an environmental education nonprofit agency.

4-Hers raising animals at alternative venues fulfill all 4-H market livestock requirements such as Meat Quality Assurance trainings, weigh-ins, and record keeping. Youth typically pay a small, refundable deposit to the partner venue and volunteer time to clean and maintain facilities.



The Bottom Line

- County government, nonprofits, and other 4-H partners are giving youth with little or no farm or ranch experience the chance to raise market livestock for county fairs and build valuable life skills.

Contact Information

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Results

These partner programs demonstrate community commitment to youth development and highlight the value of the 4-H market livestock project. As it becomes more cost-prohibitive for young families to farm and ranch, alternative venues help maintain the tradition of raising livestock by connecting youth to agriculture. They learn the demands and responsibilities of raising the animals—from attending to daily duties and maintaining animal health to record keeping and making ethical decisions.

As highlighted in University of Wisconsin Extension research, middle and high school students participating in 4-H livestock projects gain more knowledge, skills and behaviors that benefit them for a lifetime than compared to their non-4-H peers. ¹

“It’s been a really positive experience for my son to have the responsibility of taking care of his project every day at least twice a day, from picking his animals out at the beginning of the year all the way to seeing them out the door as they head off to market.”

– Ed Corriveau

Parent of Hayden Town Kids 4-Her

“Hard working, responsible kids may not be as common as they used to be, so I think it’s like a breath of fresh air to see kids working with their animals in a worthwhile endeavor. Just this morning, I drove down to the barn in Eagle and there were two boys (age 10 and 12) exercising their lambs. They had ridden their bikes from home. . . .it was cool to see!”

– Jenny Wood

Eagle County Extension 4-H Agent

Participating Counties

Adams County
Baca County
Chaffee County
Douglas County
Eagle County
Grand County
Gunnison County
Pueblo County
Rio Blanco County
Routt County

¹ UW Extension. “4-H animal projects develop strong character, ethics and life skills.” October, 2006. www.uwex.edu/impacts/search/documents/120.pdf.