

4-H Pet Show | General Rules and Guidelines

The 4-H Pet Show is designed to enable youth with a passion for companion animals to show case their skills and knowledge about pet care, as well as show off their pets to an audience. The Pet Show consists of a display and presentation on a skill or technique specific to their pet, as well as the opportunity to talk to the public about their companion animal.

General Rules and Regulations

1. The 4-H Pet Show is open to all youth ages 8 – 18 as of January 1st of the current year.
2. Youth must be enrolled in 4-H and in an active club if they are going to be competing as a 4-H member. Contact your local county extension office for more information on becoming a 4-H member.
3. Live animals are not required for participation. A plush or toy animal is appropriate and will not be penalized.
4. All pets must be entered into the correct class (see below) and entry forms and fees turned into the county office before pets can be unloaded or brought inside.
5. Only pets within their class will be permitted inside (i.e. no dogs during Small Pet presentations)
6. All live pets must have a hard sided carrier, kennel, aquarium, or bowl that is appropriate for transporting their pet. Pets without a carrier will be excused for their own safety.
7. All exhibitors are responsible for their own pets
8. Any female exhibiting signs of heat will NOT be allowed on the grounds
9. Exhibitors may enter one pet per class, but must have a new poster/display per class
 - A. Dogs
 - B. Cats
 - C. Pocket Pets
 - D. Reptiles & Aquatics
 - E. Other

Pet Classes

A. Dogs

All breeds, sizes, and classifications of dogs are welcome to participate, but wolf, coyote, or hybrids will not be allowed. Dogs must have proof of vaccinations submitted with registration or they will not be allowed on the grounds. Furthermore, puppies must be a minimum of 6 months with all required vaccinations completed. Exhibitors bringing a dog should have a properly fitted collar or harness, leash, and a hard sided kennel as a "safe place" for the dog if needed. Dogs that are acting overly anxious or stressed will be excused. Female dogs exhibiting signs of heat will not be allowed on the grounds.

B. Cats

All breeds and sizes of cats are welcome! Cats should be used to traveling and be comfortable on a harness and leash. Cats should come in a hard sided carrier or kennel for their safety and as a "safe place" as needed. Cats and kittens must be 4 months old and should have all required vaccinations at the time of the show, and proof of vaccinations should be included with registration.

C. Pocket Pets

The largest category includes almost any pet that is not a dog or cat, but still has fur. Chinchillas, guinea pigs, sugar gliders, rabbits, domestic mice and rats, and ferrets would fall into this category. This is not an exhaustive list, use your best judgement when registering in this class. All Pocket Pets must come with a hard sided carrier or kennel, and may wear a harness and leash. Pets should be used to traveling and being handled.

D. Reptiles, Amphibians, & Aquatics

All reptiles and aquatics should come in an aquarium or other hard sided carrier. All necessary equipment such as heat lamps, heating pads, etc. are the responsibility of the exhibitor. Pets should be accustomed to traveling and being handled, but it is not required. Youth are encouraged to bring hand sanitizer and help educate the public about importance of proper hand-washing when handling these pets.

E. Other

Any other companion animal that does not fit into the categories above may be exhibited in the "other" category. Any animal listed as "other" is subject to approval however, so do not delay in getting your entries in. Examples of "other" pets would be pygmy goats, birds, arachnids, and more. The same rules apply. Pets should come with a carrier and be accustomed to traveling.

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Health Requirements

The show committee reserves the right to excuse any animal that appears to be overly stressed or in condition that indicates a health problem. Any signs of pink eye, fungus, mites, open sores, or any other signs of contagious or infectious conditions will result in dismissal (with no refund).

Additionally, dogs and cats must have the following proofs of vaccinations (by a licensed veterinarian). Copies of the vaccination record should be mailed with the entry form.

Dogs: Rabies, Distemper, Hepatitis, Bordetella, Parainfluenza, Parvovirus

Cats: Rabies, Distemper

Pet Show Procedure

The 4-H Pet Show consists of a presentation and a public walk-through. All youth will be assigned a time slot based on their pet class. Pets from different classes are not allowed in the show area!

Youth will be assigned a table to set up their display and stand with their pet. A rug, mat, or pad, should be used if their pet is going to be on the table. Participants will be interviewed by a judge and then asked to present on their display. After judging is complete, the public should be encouraged to walk through and talk to the youth about their pets. If the pet show has enough volunteers and space allows, the public could walk through while judging is taking place.

Interview: each youth will be asked simple questions about their project (breed, age, something unique, how long they have been in 4-H, etc.,) and will be judged on their confidence and public speaking skills (see rubric). During this time, the youth should introduce themselves and their pet.

Display and Presentation: youth will pick a topic to demonstrate their knowledge and skill in companion animal care. Youth should be sure to introduce themselves, their pet, and their topic if they did not do so during the interview phase. The topic is up to the exhibitor but should be something that takes 2 - 5 minutes to complete. Some examples are dental care, proper nail trimming for a rabbit, how to fit a harness on a cat, common diseases, first aid, bringing their pet home, or anything that relates to their project. Presentation topics should be educational and age appropriate, and show case the youth's growth with their project. During the presentation, props and models are appropriate and a stuffed animal may be used. The display can range from a slide show on a computer to labeled models. Some other examples are posters, scrap books, computer generated slides, or a video. Youth will be judged on their knowledge and the quality of their presentation (see rubric).

Public Walk-Through: this portion of the Pet Show occurs after or during the display and presentation judging. Patrons of the fair will be allowed to walk through the exhibits and ask questions about your pets. Youth may offer to let the public pet or touch their pets if they wish, but they do not have to. Only the exhibitor or their parent/guardian should pick up or hold their pets during the show or while on the grounds. Fairs are encouraged to set up a "People's Choice" award and can come up with their own categories. Some categories to consider are "cutest pet", "most unique pet", "look-alike", and "most educational display".

Clover Buds

Youth who are younger than 8 years old are considered Clover Buds. These youth may participate in the Pet Show with the help of a parent or older sibling and do not need to bring a display. Instead, they will be interviewed by the judge and will demonstrate a simple skill such as a trick their pet has learned, how to properly hold a leash, how to give treats, or identifying different body parts. Parents or older siblings may help these youth throughout the entire process.