OTTAWA COUNTY 4-H CONDUCT POLICY
Revised December 1992

The Ottawa County 4-H Program has established and maintained through the years a heritage of educational youth development. This heritage is vital to the lives of 4-H members both now and in the future. In order to sustain the confidence Ottawa County citizens have placed in 4-H, certain standards of behavior need to be maintained. Subsequently, this document has been designed to identify those standards with regard to the Ottawa County 4-H Program.

County 4-H policy is determined by the Ottawa County 4-H Council under the auspices of the county Cooperative Extension Service (CES). The 4-H Council is comprised of elected and appointed members, using the advice from 4-H members, leaders and parents; county CES agents; state 4-H staff, and/or others interested in the county 4-H program.

MEMBERSHIP: The Ottawa County 4-H program is open to all youth ages 5 to 19 (by December 31 of the current project year) and to adults who meet handicapper guidelines, without regard to race, color, national origin, sex or handicap. Married young men and women of 4-H age may participate in the 4-H program; however, they must participate by the same rules and/or guidelines as unmarried persons.

All projects must be recorded in the 4-H office as specified by project guidelines or by June 1 for members to participate in a current year fair.

Enrollment must be renewed annually by completing an appropriate county 4-H enrollment form.

RESIDENCE: Individuals living in one county may be a 4-H member in another county as determined by county policy. However, a member may enroll in any given project in only one county at any given time. The purpose of this policy is to assist those youth who live in proximity of another county, go to school in another county and/or have friends in another county where joining a club in the adjacent county is in the member’s best interest educationally and socially. This policy is not intended to provide an escape mechanism for 4-H members not willing to follow the rules in their resident county. Questions regarding member acceptance in the adjacent county rest with the county 4-H Council and/or Cooperative Extension Service staff of the receiving county.

DEADLINES: The proper compliance with established, stated and published final dates and deadlines is considered an appropriate expectation of 4-H membership. Submitting required exhibits, applications, reports, etc. on time and following the rules is part of the 4-H learning experience and is considered reasonable. Individuals not complying with these expectations may lose awards and privileges. This is especially true in animal projects where animal ownership, raising and identification has a specific time line as part of the project requirements. Members not complying with established and published requirements may be denied any awards for that project.
EXHIBIT ELIGIBILITY: All exhibits must be prepared, constructed or assembled by the exhibitor. School projects are not eligible unless made under the auspices of the 4-H school project program. The exhibitor must have primary responsibility for development, care and/or training of their project on or before any and all applicable county enrollment/registration/ownership deadlines and continuously until after the project(s) is officially released from the fair. Members should be signed up ahead of fair for entry.

Exhibitors in the horse and pony project area may borrow or lease their project animal(s) subject to the approval of both the county 4-H Horse Committee and 4-H Youth Agent.

Members may exhibit projects at all three fairs in Ottawa County, with the exception of market livestock and market livestock notebooks where notebook is exhibited as a part of the market livestock project. Animal Science notebooks, as a separate project, may be exhibited at all three fairs. Members are limited to 2 market projects, only one of which may be bovine. These two market projects may be split amongst fairs.

ATTENDANCE: Attendance at 4-H meetings is highly encouraged as a part of a member’s overall educational experience. 4-H club leaders and members of local clubs may establish goals for attendance, exhibits, completion, etc. to meet criteria established for awards and recognition within their own club as long as they do not conflict with Cooperative Extension Service equal opportunity/affirmative action policies.

EXHIBITION: Exhibition of 4-H projects in local, county or state exhibits/fairs is considered a privilege and is voluntary on the part of the exhibitor. The exhibition of 4-H projects provides the 4-H’er an opportunity to display their 4-H projects, entertain wholesome competition and enjoy a positive educational/social environment with their peers. With the privilege of exhibition also comes the obligation of abiding by all of the rules attendant to the respective 4-H project.

Disobedience of the established rules of the projects may be grounds for disciplinary action up to and including exclusion from the exhibition.

COMPLETION: A 4-H member is considered “complete” in his/her project work when he/she has (1) filled out and submitted an official 4-H club member enrollment form by the established and published date for enrolling, (2) turned in any required project reports by the established and published deadline date and (3) exhibited the required project exhibit at Spring Achievement Days, or fair during the current year, as governed by project guidelines.

SPECIAL NOTE: Members who have met requirements (1) and (2) above, but who are unable to exhibit due to circumstances beyond their control, may still receive a “complete” in a given project area by filling out an Absentee Project Report Form and submitting it to the Cooperative Extension Agent office. (The form includes a section for leader verification of project completion.)

Members are encouraged to keep member record books of completion.
SPECIAL CONSIDERATION FOR HANDICAPPED YOUTH: Special consideration in judging will be given to exhibitors identified on enrollment forms as having a handicap(s) (physical, mental, emotional, and/or learning) which affects their ability to compete effectively with non-handicapped exhibitors. Handicapped youth may be assisted, as necessary, during project evaluation and/or in the show ring by a parent/guardian, leader or other youth exhibitor. It will be the responsibility of the “assistant” to inform the judging clerk (in the case of project evaluation) or the show coordinator (in the case of animal science classes) of the reason for his/her presence at evaluation or in the show ring.

5-8 YEAR OLDS: Members 5-8 years old show non-competitive only and are not allowed to show hogs, lambs, beef, dairy cows, or horses.

In the event of a medical situation, we reserve the right to ask for a Physician’s note of approval for participation.

During the fair it is the individual member’s responsibility to prepare his/her own exhibit for show/exhibition. Members may only be ASSISTED in this preparation by 4-H members of their own fair.

4-H horse/pony project animals may be ridden by the EXHIBITOR ONLY on those days in which the exhibitor participates in any 4-H horse/pony classes at the fair.

An exhibitor and his/her animal may be excused from the ring, at the discretion of the judge, coordinator or show officials if the behavior of the animal is deemed to be a safety hazard and/or is seriously affecting the ability of other exhibitors to show their animals.

Animals entered in fitting and showmanship classes are to be shown by the exhibitor only. Since judging in fitting and showmanship classes is based on the member’s ability to fit and show his/her animal to its best advantage, adult assistance may only be provided to secure and return a “run away” animal to the exhibitor, with this assistance preferably being provided by show personnel.

Animals entered in breeding stock or market livestock classes may be shown by someone other than the exhibitor in the event of a personal emergency that prevents the exhibitor from being able to show his/her own animal, with approval of project committee. The “substitute exhibitor” will be another 4-H or FFA member.

“Assistant handlers” are allowed in the pen, herd and flock classes.

Artificial means of adding, removing and/or remedying physical defects and/or conformation in 4-H animal exhibits including, but not limited to, lifting and/or filling under the skin; beating and/or striking of an animal to make it tense its muscles and feel firmer when handled by the judge to determine amount of firmness of muscling and/or to “fill” an area as a result of swelling; use of pain inducing compounds and/or equipment; false switches, hair not growing naturally in the specific location; and painting, dyeing or bleaching of hair to change its color will be considered fraud and deception. No forced administration of fluids of any kind to create gut fill will be allowed. The decision of the designated official(s) shall be final as to existence of the above conditions; and, the exhibit(s) in question will be disqualified and removed from the fairgrounds immediately.
ATTENTION: Show sticks, whips, bats, crops and spurs may be used in accordance with their intended use as show aids, as class rules allow. However, improper, abusive use of show aids will not be tolerated.

Market livestock animals must be weighed in at specified times and places. Bovine and lambs must also be noseprinted at this time.

Tampering (altering) and/or misrepresentation as to ownership, breeding, age, preparation and/or other irregularity in exhibiting will be considered fraud and deception.

The Ottawa County 4-H Council reserves the right to require any animal to be subject to examinations and/or tests as prescribed to determine if a substance has been administered to an animal to alter its conformation and/or temperament. Administering of said substances will be considered fraud and deception. Any fees incurred with said examinations will be the responsibility of the party in error.

BEHAVIORAL EXPECTATIONS OF 4-H MEMBERS & LEADERS: 4-H members and leaders, when participating or acting on behalf of the Ottawa County 4-H Program, are expected to conduct themselves in accordance with accepted standards of social behavior, to respect the rights of others, and to refrain from any conduct which may be injurious to the program. Actions constituting misconduct for which 4-H members may be subject to disciplinary penalties include, but are not limited to:

1. Dishonesty in connection with any 4-H activity by cheating or knowingly furnishing false information.

2. Alteration or the unauthorized use of 4-H records and emblems.

3. Obstruction or disruption of any 4-H activity or aiding and encouraging other persons to engage in such conduct.

4. Failure to comply with specific rules of a given project, contest or activity.

5. Failure to comply with directions of 4-H officials acting in the proper performance of their duties.
Being in a new environment away from home (i.e. fairs, trips, camps, exchanges) can be an exciting new learning experience because there are so many opportunities for building new friendships and participating in new adventures which will enrich 4-H members’ lives. These growth experiences require many people to live together harmoniously, and all participants are expected to conduct themselves as ladies and gentlemen.

Inappropriate and unacceptable social behaviors include, but are not limited to:

1. Possession or the use of fire crackers, gun powder, firearms, chemicals or other materials that can be used to create an explosive mixture.

2. Misuse of fire equipment or fire alarms.

3. Having a guest of the opposite sex in your sleeping quarters.

4. Physical abuse or conduct which threatens or endangers the health, safety and/or well-being of any person or animal.

5. Theft or malicious damage to property.

6. Possession, use or distribution of alcohol or illegal drugs.

7. Lewd, indecent or obscene conduct and/or language.

8. Unauthorized entry, use or occupancy of any facility.

9. Any conduct which threatens or interferes with the maintenance of appropriate order and discipline, or invades the rights of others.

HANDLING OF COMPLAINTS: 4-H members, leaders and/or parents compelled to bring a 4-H rules violation complaint against a given member(s) will be required to sign a letter of complaint stating the reason and alleged grounds for registering the complaint.

Any member(s) against whom a 4-H rules violation complaint has been filed will have the right to read the letter of complaint.

The 4-H Agent (or County Extension Director in the absence of the 4-H Agent), Fair Coordinator or Fair Board Representative reserve the right to determine whether sufficient evidence exists to merit further action.

When violations occur at county, state, national and/or international 4-H events, the following procedures will be followed:

1. The parent(s)/guardian(s) will be contacted to arrange transportation home for the violator(s).

2. The local 4-H Youth Agent and/or County Extension Director will be notified. The 4-H Council President will also be notified.
3. If it is determined by 4-H staff members, leaders or other individuals in charge that the offense warrants it, the offender(s) will be turned over to the proper authorities.

PENALTIES: If, in the opinion of the 4-H staff member(s), 4-H Coordinators, or 4-H leaders in charge of the event/activity, evidence of alteration, excessive outside help, unethical preparation and/or misconduct is noted, the exhibit and/or member may be subject to any and/or all of the following penalties:

1. Disqualification from the show/exhibition.

2. Forfeit of all premiums and awards.

3. Disbarment from participation in that project/event/activity and/or other related projects/events/activities.

Further, enforcement does not waive the 4-H Youth Agent’s and/or Council’s right to enforce penalties collectively at a later date under appropriate circumstance.

DUE PROCESS: 4-H members have the right to appeal the levying of a 4-H rule(s) violation penalty(ies) according to the following process:

1. The member must request a hearing before the 4-H Council at its next regularly scheduled monthly meeting. Requests must be made in writing to the 4-H Council President at least five (5) business days prior to the meeting.

2. All parties involved will be notified by certified mail with return receipt of the meeting date, time and location.

3. All parties involved will have the right to present their case as to why he/she/they feel the penalty(ies) should be reconsidered.

4. All parties involved will be notified in writing within five (5) business days by certified mail with return receipt of the 4-H Council’s decision regarding the appeal.