Dairy Heifer Project

South Carolina Youth Livestock Program
History of the Project

The Dairy Program is one of the oldest in 4-H. Throughout the years, thousands of boys and girls from all over South Carolina have taken part in 4-H dairy work. These 4-H alumni are now found in all "walks of life." Many are outstanding farmers, some are doctors, veterinarians, and teachers, while some are leaders in the business industry. In nearly every case, these people look back on their 4-H dairy experience as an outstanding part of their youth.

Each year, 4-H and FFA dairy project members exhibit their dairy project animals at fairs, shows, and events in nearly every region of the state. Millions of people have seen or learned about 4-H and FFA through these youth dairy exhibits at the many fairs and events in South Carolina. This offers a tremendous opportunity for 4-H, FFA, Clemson Cooperative Extension, and the dairy industry to educate and inform the general public about the dairy industry and youth dairy programs.

The future of the South Carolina dairy industry lies with the state’s youth. However, the number of rural, non-dairy farms continues to increase while the number of South Carolina dairy farms continues to decrease, thus reducing the potential number of youth dairy members from dairy backgrounds. Rural, non-dairy farm residents often have children of 4-H/FFA ages who are interested in having an animal as a project, but because a dairy animal eventually has to be milked, and in most cases milking facilities are not available, the Dairy Program has not been successful on these rural, non-dairy farms.

The Dairy Heifer Project was developed to bridge that gap. It began in 1974 and was designed to provide boys and girls in South Carolina, who have non-dairy backgrounds, an opportunity to raise a dairy heifer and experience the dairy industry and then sell their heifer at the South Carolina Dairy Bred Heifer Sale before she begins milking. Now, many youth with non-dairy backgrounds are able to participate and experience the dairy industry without the requirement of milking facilities. In addition, the Dairy Bred Heifer Sale serves as an excellent source of herd replacements for South Carolina dairymen.

Objectives

The SC Dairy Heifer program works hard in helping participants to:

- Develop character and life skills through 4-H and/or FFA work.
- Develop integrity and sportsmanship by caring for, training, and showing a dairy heifer.
- Increase experience with and knowledge about the dairy industry and dairy products.
- Develop a better understanding of basic dairy heifer anatomy, nutrition, management and healthcare.
- Stimulate positive public interest in the dairy industry.
- Be a positive ambassador to the public for 4-H, FFA, and animal agriculture.
- Learn and use business principles including use of animal records and financial records.
- Furnish a source of well-grown replacements for dairy herds.
Advisory Committee

Tom Dobbins Director, Clemson Cooperative Extension
Tina Horn Area Agent - Dairy
Robin Long Agricultural Education; Clemson University
Frank FitzSimmons County Extension Agent (Retired)
Doug Sims Guernsey Representative
Dr. Boyd Parr Livestock Poultry Health; Clemson University
Dr. Adam Eichelberger Livestock Poultry Health; Clemson University
Mike Loveless Area Agent - Dairy/Horticulture
Donnie King Clemson University (Retired)
Phil Perry County Extension Agent, Saluda (Retired)
Travis Mitchell County Extension Agent, Saluda
Katie Shaw County Extension Agent, Laurens

The Committee works to ensure high learning outcomes and successful project experiences for each participant. They also develop and implement the rules and regulations that govern the project. The Breed Club Representatives will relay to the Committee suggestions from their respective breed club. The Extension representative will relay Project activities to their respective areas.

Project Overview

Any 4-H or FFA member, age 9-17, can raise and show a registered dairy heifer for 18 months in the South Carolina Dairy Heifer Project. Interested youth submit applications January through February and in the spring (usually April), is the Project Kick-Off where participants will randomly draw for their dairy heifer. Currently there are three breeds of dairy cattle being used in the project; Holstein, Jersey, and Guernsey. Producers continually support this project by providing high-quality heifers at a largely discounted price to project youth. Participants are expected to pay for their heifers, in full, at Kick-Off. There may be financial opportunities available to help offset the initial cost of a heifer.

During the next 18 months, participants learn how to care for, manage, train, and show their animal while exploring the world of dairy cattle. Participants keep detailed records about their project animal and their learning experiences in their project record book. Since the participants purchase the animal they are responsible for all expenses and incidences associated with that animal (feed, veterinary care, breeding, illness, death of animal, etc.).

About 10 months after receiving their heifer participants are responsible for getting their heifer bred so she will be due to calve shortly following the Bred Heifer Sale held at the South Carolina State Fair in October. This serves as the conclusion of the project in which participants show their heifer one more time during the dairy cattle show and then all heifers are sold in the Bred Heifer Sale. The participant keeps money earned from the sale of their heifer minus any fees. After all heifers have been sold participants submit their project record book for scoring.
Participant Eligibility

Participants must:

- be, and remain, a current, dues paying member in active status of either 4-H or FFA. You will not receive a heifer if you do not have an active status with 4-H or FFA or have not paid current membership fees to your County Agent or FFA Advisor. Because this is a long term project it spans two membership years. You must remain current both years. If your membership lapses during the project your membership fees will be taken out of the final sale price of your heifer and you will not be eligible to receive another heifer in the future.

- be at least 9 years of age but not over 17 years of age as of January 1st of the project year, unless approved by the Heifer Project Committee Chair.

- be able to purchase and pay in full for their heifer at the project Kick-Off. Financial assistance may be available, refer to the “Payments and Financing” section for more information.

- be able to attend (with a parent or legal guardian) the project Kick-Off. Unless other arrangements have been approved by the committee chairperson prior to the event. Each project member will draw for his/her heifer that day and is responsible for getting their heifer home.

- have access to a farm or adequate acreage with adequate shelter and space to house a dairy heifer for 18 months.

- be willing to house and properly raise a dairy heifer for approximately 18 months.

- send in the Official Monthly Record Sheet to the Heifer Project Coordinator the first week of each month. The height and weight data contained on this record sheet will be posted online for your advisors and other project participants to view.

- agree to get their heifer bred in the winter (late January - February) prior to the Bred Heifer Sale.

- agree to sell their heifer in the Bred Heifer Sale held in Columbia, SC during the State Fair. If a heifer calves prior to or during the State Fair notify the Project Coordinator IMMEDIATELY. Both the project heifer AND the calf may be sold during the Bred Heifer Sale. Plan ahead by not breeding too early!

- be responsible for all costs incurred during the duration of the Project (feed, housing, veterinarians, breeding, etc.).

- be aware that often members only break even and some even lose money. It is a time-consuming and sometimes costly project. The goal of a youth livestock project is learning and experiencing animal agriculture while developing life-skills!

There will be a two heifers per family limit unless approved by the Heifer Project Committee.

It is recommended that participants obtain insurance on their heifer. If anything happens to the project heifer (gets sick, dies, causes an auto accident, etc.) the participant is liable for all expenses incurred (loans still have to be paid back) and the committee will not reimburse for expenses or replace heifers in such situations. There are few exceptions to this and it is left to the committee to evaluate each circumstance and determine if there will be any project involvement. The decision of the committee is final.
Participants are highly encouraged to submit a dairy heifer project record book immediately following the Bred Heifer Sale.

**Participant Selection in Case of a Shortage**

The Project Committee remains committed to providing as many quality heifers as needed; however, for various reasons the number of heifers the committee can secure may not equal the number of applicants for the project. **The following criteria have been established and will be utilized in the selection of participants from the applicant pool should the committee not be able to secure a sufficient number of dairy heifers:**

1. Level of Project Participation in past years
   - Submission and completion of the Project Record Book
   - Number of shows in which the applicant competed
   - Number of other dairy events, activities, or workshops attended/helped with
2. Order applications were received
3. New Applicants

It is not the desire of the Project Committee to eliminate anyone from participating in the project; however, if needed, the committee will use the above guidelines in the selection of participants only in the event of a heifer shortage. All decisions made by the committee regarding the selection of project participants will be final.

**Payments and Financing**

2015 prices are set at $700.00 for all breeds Holsteins, Jerseys, and Guernseys.

Each participant is responsible for payment of his or her heifer. **Payment in full will be expected on the day of the Kick-off.** If other arrangements need to be made, they must be approved by the committee chair in advance.

The project can only accept cash or check. Checks need to be payable to Clemson University. If a check bounces, the participant will be invoiced for the amount of the heifer along with a bounced check fee and for each month the balance goes unpaid an overdue fee will be added to the balance until the amount is paid in full to the project. If the balance is not taken care of prior to the Bred Heifer Sale the balance due will be taken out of the sale price of the participant’s heifer.

The South Carolina Holstein Association offers 2 interest-free loans for 4-H/FFA members who qualify. **These are loans and must be PAID BACK!** The application for the Dairy Heifer Project must indicate that the individual wishes to be considered for the South Carolina Holstein Association Loan. The qualifications are:

1. 1st time in the Heifer Project,
2. A 50-100 word essay on why they are interested in the Holstein breed, and
3. A recommendation letter from their county agent or agricultural teacher. The county agent or agricultural teacher is to certify that the 4-H/FFA member recommended
can provide quality care for the heifer. Also, the county agent or agricultural teacher is to check on the heifer periodically and send a report to Clemson.

4. Recipients of the loan will sign a Loan Agreement Form and be required to abide by all heifer project guidelines.

Project Win-A-Heifer - The South Carolina State Fair sponsors heifers at the Heifer Project Kick-Off. The youth selected to receive these scholarship animals will be chosen from those who are applying to participate in the Dairy Heifer Project. The application for the Dairy Heifer Project must indicate that the individual wishes to be considered as a candidate for Project Win-A-Heifer. Requirements are:

1. Project members are eligible to win a scholarship heifer no more than two (2) times.
2. Must be a 4-H or FFA member.
3. Must have been in the Heifer Project or in the 4-H dairy project for at least two years.
4. Must submit a recommendation letter from their county agent or agricultural teacher with the application. The county agent or agricultural teacher is to certify that the 4-H/FFA member recommended can provide quality care for the heifer.
5. Must submit most recent 4-H Dairy Heifer Project or Dairy Project record book with the application.
6. Must submit a 100-500 word essay about their experiences in the 4-H dairy program and why they feel they should be awarded a scholarship heifer.
7. Recipients will agree to show the project heifer at the State Fair Junior Dairy Show the following two years.
8. Recipients of the scholarship heifers will be members of the 4-H Dairy Heifer Project, sign a Heifer Project Agreement Form and be required to abide by all heifer project guidelines.

Participants are encouraged to obtain insurance on their project animal. If anything happens to their heifer (gets sick, dies, causes an auto accident, etc.) the participant will be liable and any loans will still have to be paid back. If insurance is desired, the participants will have to purchase directly through an insurance company if it is not already covered under a homeowners policy.

Farm Service Agency (FSA) offers Rural Youth Loans to help rural youth learn the business of agriculture. Visit your local FSA office or their website www.fsa.usda.gov for more information.

### Heifers

These are animals. Animals can get sick, injured, or die. Once you purchase your heifer she is yours and therefore if she gets sick, injured, or dies she is your responsibility. The Heifer Project is not responsible for replacing sick or injured heifers. There are few exceptions to this and it is left to the committee to evaluate each circumstance and determine if there will be any project involvement. The decision of the committee is final.

Participants can select a breed preference; however, each participant must list a second and third choice in the event there are fewer heifers per breed than requests. Breed preference is NOT guaranteed.

The Committee works with all cooperating producers and will select all calves. Calves will primarily be purchased from South Carolina dairymen. Breed representatives will encourage their producers to make calves available to the project.
Calves for this project will be registered and born approximately August, September and October. These calves will be out of cows with herd average production or above. An effort will be made to select a very uniform group of calves with no major differences in size and production characteristics. In addition, calves will also be selected for desirable type.

**Project Participant Responsibilities**

Participants will need to obtain a project mentor for the duration of the project. This can be a 4-H club leader, high school agriculture teacher, 4-H Extension Agent, local dairy producer, or other industry professional. This person should be highly experienced and qualified and willing to help the participant learn how to properly care for, train, and show a dairy heifer.

Participants should keep in close contact with their project mentor, County Extension Agent, or Ag Teacher regarding their project animal to ensure she is receiving proper care and training.

Participants must show in at least one dairy show each year and at the Junior Dairy Show at the SC State Fair, if possible. Additionally, they are encouraged to participate in other dairy events and activities.

Dairy Extension personnel will visit each participant on the farm at least once a year. All participants must make their heifer available for evaluation by Extension personnel.

Participants must feed and care for their heifer as prescribed by the County Extension Agent, Clemson Dairy Extension personnel, and/or their project helper so as to grow the heifer out in a manner which will allow her to develop to her maximum inherited ability.

Any participant that is suspected of or determined to be abusing or neglecting animals or acting in an unsportsmanlike manner can be dismissed from a show, removed from the project, have their heifer removed from their care, or banned from future animal projects as deemed necessary by the project committee.

All participants are required to fill out the Monthly Record Sheet with taped weight, height, feed intake, and costs. These will be sent to the Heifer Project Coordinator the first week of each month. The height and weight data contained on this record sheet will be posted online for your advisors and other project participants to view.

Participants are highly encouraged to submit a record book each year immediately following the Bred Heifer Sale.

Each heifer must be bred to a superior registered dairy bull. This breeding will take place when the heifer reaches the proper age and size for breeding and so that she will calve shortly after the Dairy Bred Heifer Sale at the South Carolina State Fair.

If you have any problems during the project please notify the Heifer Project Coordinator immediately. The committee is here to help!
Heifer Project Kick-Off

The Dairy Heifer Project Kick-Off will be held at the Saluda County Fairgrounds each spring (usually April). All participants and a parent or legal guardian must be present at Kick-Off unless approved by the committee prior to the event. In addition, agents and teachers are encouraged to attend.

Calves will be assembled at the Saluda County Fairgrounds for Kick-Off. The consignor will be responsible for transportation of calves to Saluda, but participants will be responsible for transportation of calves back to their home. The heifer project participants must make these arrangements.

Calves will be numbered and participants will be randomly selected to draw for their calf. Through this method, the participants and calves will be randomly matched. This means that all Holstein participants will draw for Holsteins, Jersey participants will draw for Jerseys, and Guernsey participants will draw for Guernseys.

Payment in full will be expected on the day of the Kick-off. If other arrangements need to be made, they must be approved by the Heifer Project Coordinator in advance.

Bred Heifer Sale & SC State Fair

Youth are responsible for registering to show at the SC State Fair. Registering for and participating in this project does NOT register ANYONE for the SC State Fair.

- State Fair regular registration is typically open from July 1 – September 1
- LATE registration is typically September 2-26
- Absolutely NO registrations are accepted after the deadline!
- Check the State Fair website and register EARLY!

The Dairy Heifer Project concludes with an all-breed Bred Heifer Sale that is held in conjunction with the South Carolina State Fair in October in Columbia, SC.

To bring maximum dollars, project members should write the breeder of their heifer and any other dairymen and personally invite them to the SC Dairy Bred Heifer Sale at least one month prior to the sale.

In order to bring the most benefit to the youth in this project and taking into consideration the historical buyer’s information from this sale, we are no longer requiring all sale heifers to be blood tested for TB and Brucellosis prior to the sale. HOWEVER, if a heifer is sold to an individual traveling to a state that requires these tests, arrangements for testing will have to be made and the cost of the test will be the project member’s responsibility. Other expenses will be dealt with on a case by case basis with the project member, project committee, and buyer. You can still have your heifer tested prior to the sale, simply present paperwork at the time of project check-in.

All sale heifers will be checked for pregnancy by a veterinarian selected by the Heifer Project Committee the evening before the sale. The project member (or a family member) needs to be present in order to make the heifer available for pregnancy check, accurately identify their animal, and answer any questions about breeding information.
If a heifer calves prior to or during the State Fair notify the Project Coordinator IMMEDIATELY. Both the project heifer AND the calf may be sold during the Bred Heifer Sale. Each situation is unique and will be decided upon by the Project Committee. Plan ahead by not breeding too early!

All animals will be sold and transferred to the new owner with full payment expected at the close of the sale. Showing the heifer, after it is sold, is not allowed by the consignor – no exceptions.

- **Project members interested in purchasing heifers during the Bred Heifer Sale MUST obtain approval from the Heifer Project Coordinator PRIOR to the sale.**
- Project members who purchase a heifer from the Bred Heifer Sale can show that heifer in the Open Dairy Show if they are already registered to show in the Open Dairy Show.
- Project members who purchase a heifer from the Bred Heifer Sale CANNOT use the purchased heifer in any Showmanship Classes.
- It is acceptable for the buyer of a heifer to allow a project member to handle their project heifer in the Open Show, if the BUYER asks the project member.
- Project members who purchase a heifer from the sale need to ensure they are able to properly care for and manage a high quality, high milk producing dairy cow. They CANNOT be managed like a beef cow. Obtain expert advice before planning to purchase a heifer from the sale!

A Sales Catalogue will be provided and distributed before the Sale. A reputable auctioneer will conduct the Sale. All three breeds will be sold on the same day. The Advisory Committee will determine the Sale schedule by breeds and by animals.

### Questions or Concerns

If you have questions or your goat might have a health concern CALL YOUR VET! Please don’t wait until he is very sick, and please don’t let non-veterinarians perform veterinary procedures on your goat! This can turn a simple issue into a very big problem!

If you experience any problems or concerns about or during the Dairy Heifer Project please contact these individuals in the appropriate order.

1. Your leader, agriculture teacher, or project helper
2. County Extension 4-H or Livestock Agent
3. Heifer Project Coordinator
4. Heifer Project Advisory Committee

Any questions or concerns that are brought to the Advisory Committee will be acted on and their decision will be final.
Approximate Costs

Understand that all amounts listed here are APPROXIMATE. These figures are to just give you an idea of the costs associated with raising a dairy heifer for 18 months. The numbers listed are pulled from the data provided in the project record books submitted each year. Amounts can be higher or lower depending on many factors. Equipment and miscellaneous expenses are listed but these are widely variable depending on what you have on hand, what cost breaks you can find, and your unique situations; but they should be considered when planning for a dairy heifer. Feed is the bulk of your expense and can, again, vary widely based on many factors. Do not use these numbers as absolute figures!

We encourage everyone to investigate possible ways to reduce costs while still providing top quality care for your heifer. Remember, a 4-H project is about experiencing new things, learning new skills, making new friends, and developing young people.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Initial cost of heifer</th>
<th>$700</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>¹Feeds</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roughages (8,000 lbs)</td>
<td>$600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concentrates (1,500 lbs)</td>
<td>$500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>²Health &amp; Medical</td>
<td>$150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>³Equipment</td>
<td>$100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>⁴Other</td>
<td>$100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Approximate cost of project</strong></td>
<td>$2,150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Average sale price of heifers from 2010-14:</strong></td>
<td>$1,743.08</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

¹Cost may vary depending on breed, market prices, purchase type (bulk vs. packaged), and amount you need to feed your heifer. If your heifer requires more or less feed this amount will change as well. This also depends on if you have grass for grazing available, you may not need to purchase as much roughage if your heifer has a full pasture to graze.

²These costs are based on routine management practices such as vaccinations, deworming, pregnancy check, tests, pest prevention, breeding, etc. This does not include home visits, emergencies, or sickness expenses.

³This is a general idea. This can vary greatly depending on what equipment you already have on hand as well as how much you end up paying for certain items.

⁴These costs include items not added anywhere else and can vary greatly.
Clemson University Cooperative Extension Services offers its program to people of all ages, regardless of race, color, sex religion, national origin, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, marital or family status, and is an equal opportunity employer

Updated January 2015