TO: Minnesota 4-H Dairy Judging Coaches and Minnesota 4-H Staff
FROM: Minnesota 4-H Dairy Judging Committee
RE: Multi County Team Formation Process
DATE: June, 2009

The position statement for Minnesota 4-H multi county teams can be found below and is continued on the reverse side of this page. Though developed in October, 2005 its’ basic philosophy remains accurate. Please take a moment to review it.

This statement equally applies to the Minnesota 4-H Dairy judging program. If you have or are considering a multi-county team in dairy judging, you will want to read this communication carefully and follow the timeline described within it. You will find there is a role that coaches and local 4-H staff will have in forming a multi-county dairy judging team. Consider this system a “pilot system” as we move to assure the same philosophies exists in all of our state events for Bowls, Judging and Horse Hippology. **Note that it may be appropriate to have a multi county junior team, but not a multi county senior team and vice versa.**

**Multi County Dairy Judging Teams will need to be preapproved.** The review committee will be looking to see that each county has equally offered dairy judging opportunities to all that are age eligible. They will also be looking to review the judging practice schedule to assure that it includes consistent participation of team members. As technology evolves, new delivery methods for distance learning used by coaches and participants may be needed to be accessed by the committee for effectiveness. **Coaches and local staff will need to work together to assure that basic compliance is met.** All coaches that are working with 4-H members from multiple counties should be strongly encouraged to submit a multi-county team request whether they think they may have a multi-county team or not.

Most coaches will want to have their request for a multi county team approved well ahead of the State Contest. **These requests may be submitted after May 1 but no later than August 1, the year of the contest.** It should be submitted by the coach and/or 4-H staff from the requesting counties. There should be two components to the request. **First, the coach will need to develop a judging practice schedule which includes the dates and times of practice workouts and practice contests.** It is recognized that the schedule may be tentative. However, there may be follow up from the committee to make sure there is equal participation at these practices from all intended team members. **The second component is documentation from the local 4-H staff.** It is expected this documentation will be a short paragraph indicating that dairy judging as been equally offered to all dairy project members. Staff should briefly detail, how this was communicated, i.e. newsletter, or mailing to those enrolled in the dairy project. Again, follow-up clarification may be requested by the committee.

Both components of this request should be mailed, emailed or faxed to Brad Rugg at the Center for Youth Development – 4-H, who will facilitate the committee approval (these addresses and numbers are provided below). The approval process should take less than one week, though follow-up may be necessary to assure the plan is maintained. **Additionally, questions regarding the process can be directed to Brad.**

**It should be noted that this process was requested and approved by motion at the coaches meeting following the 2008 State Dairy Judging Contest.** It has been fine tuned by the dairy judging committee.
POSITION STATEMENT FOR MINNESOTA 4-H MULTI-COUNTY TEAMS
Knowledge Bowl and Judging Contests

Minnesota 4-H enjoys strong interest in Quiz Bowl and Judging Contest programs. In 2005, just over 400 youth participated in State Fair judging contests in General Livestock, Dairy, Rabbits and Consumer Decisions. Another 300 participated in Horse judging and Horse hippology at the State 4-H Horse Show. Quiz Bowl numbers have grown to over 200 teams participating in one of four regional contests. In 2005, over 1,000 youth participated in Bowls.

Two primary factors appear to influence the trends in participation numbers: 1) enrollment figures in the project areas and 2) longevity of each program. In the case of judging teams, participation has declined consistent with project enrollment numbers. An emphasis in coaches training did result in a 10% increase in overall judging team participation from 2004 to 2005. The Bowl program in Minnesota is about 20 years old. And while participation has somewhat flattened in the past few year, there has been steady growth since the programs inception.

Multi-County Teams in both the Judging Program and the Bowl Program have been allowed for a number of years. For the Judging Program, multi-county teams were allowed so that counties with minimal enrollment could offer the same educational opportunities as counties with large enrollment numbers. In Bowls, multi-county teams were begun to expose a maximum number of counties to the program quickly. However today, some counties have formed multi-county teams due to minimal enrollment.

Philosophically, Minnesota 4-H believes in the county club program. Many states have moved toward state teams comprised of the “top four performers” regardless of county affiliation. Minnesota 4-H history and philosophy, though, results in county and multi-county team participation.

Minnesota 4-H does support multi-county teams that are combined to provide bowl or judging experience to youth that would not, otherwise, be able to have these educational opportunities. Minnesota 4-H does not support the “stacking” of a multi-county team for the sole purpose of winning. These ideals are impossible to place in the rules that guide these programs. Consistency can only be accomplished if all partners – coaches, youth, parents and staff – play by the same “unwritten rules.”
Counties should first try to field a team on their own. And if that is not possible, they are encouraged to work with other county/counties to field a team. It is not appropriate for coaches to offer opportunities to selected youth. Opportunities must be offered to all youth from a given county, regardless of experience or ability. Practices must be equally communicated to all members in a given project. Likewise, youth and parents should not look for multi-county team options unless there has been an honest attempt to interest county youth in opportunities. The role of 4-H staff is to monitor the process so that equal learning opportunities are equally communicated to all potential families.

If there is evidence that multi-county teams are formed for the primary purpose of winning (stacking teams) and that promotion of educational opportunities was not equally communicated to all enrolled members, contest leadership, with the support of the Center for 4-H Youth Development can expunge Regional/State Contest results and deny national contest participation.

Questions regarding formation of county teams should be directed to Regional Educators.

Prepared October, 2005
By Bradley W. Rugg
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Center for 4-H Youth Development