
Grassland Evaluation Contest



OBJECTIVES

Targeted Life Skills: self-confidence, decision making, problem solving, critical thinking, cooperation, teamwork

This activity will train 4-H members in evaluation of grasslands and pasture for livestock and wildlife. In their training prior to the annual state contest, the 4-H'ers should learn to determine pasture type and condition, calculate forage dry matter needs of livestock, interpret soils tests and surveys, appraise pastures as wildlife habitat and identify common pasture plants. 4-H members should learn to make their own decisions based upon the best available information.

ACTIVITY

The State 4-H Grassland Evaluation Contest will be held Wednesday, May 7, 2025 at the Batesville Livestock & Forestry Station. Specific site location will not be released prior to the contest. **All teams and individuals must be registered via Formstack by their County Extension Agent by April 21, 2025. The link to the registration will be in ZSuite. The fee for teams is \$75 and the fee for individuals is \$20.** ISDs will be initiated from the State Office to bill the county after the registration deadline has passed.

Check-in will be from 9-9:30 a.m. the day of the contest at contest headquarters (Batesville Livestock & Forestry Station main building). Contestants should be prepared for contest announcements by 9:30 a.m. The contest will start as close to 10 a.m. as possible, but time for transportation to the site will be allowed. Scantrons will be collected at the end of the contest. Lunch will be provided while scantrons are scored. Awards will commence as soon as results are finalized.

ELIGIBILITY

- The contest is open to Junior and Senior 4-H members.
 - Juniors must be 9-13 years old.
 - Junior members are youth aged 9-13 as of January 1.
 - Seniors must be 14-19 years old.
 - Senior members are youth who are 14 as of January 1 and who have NOT reached their 19th birthday by January 1 of the current year. *Example: If a 4-H'er is 18 on January 1 and turns 19 on January 2, they are eligible to compete because they were 18 on January 1. If a 4-H'er turns 19 on December 31, they are ineligible to compete because they were 19 as of January 1.*
 - All participants must be enrolled in ZSuite by the registration deadline.
- FFA teams and individuals are also eligible for competition.

Pursuant to 7 CFR § 15.3, the University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture offers all its Extension and Research programs and services (including employment) without regard to race, color, sex, national origin, religion, age, disability, marital or veteran status, genetic information, sexual preference, pregnancy or any other legally protected status, and is an equal opportunity institution.

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- Eligible team members that win the Mid-America Grassland Contest (overall winner) the prior year cannot compete at the state contest for one year. They are eligible to compete as individuals for individual awards.
 - For a county to be eligible for team competition, it must have at least three entries. A county may enter four individuals, but only the top three scores will count toward the winning team.
 - A county may only enter one senior team.
 - A county may enter multiple junior teams.
 - A county may enter an unlimited number of individuals in either division.

CONTEST RULES

1. The contest will consist of four segments: Grassland Condition, Soil Interpretation, Wildlife Habitat, and Plant Identification. A 50'X50' plot will be clearly marked in the field to be used for some of the contest sections.
 - a. Grassland Condition: Participants will appraise the existing conditions of the plot and make management recommendations by evaluating soil test reports. Using the information from the grazing scenario, participants will calculate forage needs.
 - b. Soil Interpretation: Using an aerial photograph, participants will determine the soil type of the plot. Participants will evaluate soil characteristics based on the soil series and note forage adaptation to the soil type.
 - c. Wildlife Habitat: Using the plot and an aerial photograph, participants will evaluate the conditions and judge the characteristics of the field for quality of wildlife habitat. Participants will also take a 20-question, multiple-choice quiz about wildlife.
 - d. Plant Identification: Participants will identify 25 plants marked in the field. Participants will also determine if the plant is an annual or perennial.
2. Contestants will be supplied a Scantron, score cards, appropriate maps or aerial photos and any necessary information. All score cards, maps and aerial photos will be collected at each judging site.
3. Contestants may use non-programmable hand-held calculators. Each participant will need to furnish their own pencils, calculator, and clipboard.
4. Contestants will fill out their name, team name, and assigned team number on the Scantron. If all three items are left off the Scantron, the individual will not be scored at the contest and will receive a zero. If any of the three items are filled in – the judging team will try to find out who's it is.

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5. All answers must be bubbled on the Scantron. Answers marked on the scorecards will not be accepted.
 6. Contestants will be allowed twenty-five (25) minutes to judge each of the four (4) segments of the contest with five (5) minutes to move between judging sites. The total contest time is approximately two (2) hours.
 7. Contestants will NOT be allowed to:
 - a. Talk to anyone during the contest or use other printed materials for reference.
 - b. Touch plants used for the Plant Identification.
 - c. Leave the contest site during the contest. There will be NO exceptions.
 - d. Step into or touch plants within the 50 X 50 ft. plot.
 8. Only contestants and officials will be allowed within the contest area during the contest.
 9. Judge's decisions will be final concerning any questions involving the contest.

JUNIOR CONTEST

Junior 4-Hers in the Junior Division will use the same scorecards and Scantrons as the Senior and FFA Divisions.

The Junior Division participants receive simplified versions of some parts of the contest. The specific modifications to each portion of the contest are listed below:

- Grassland Condition: Juniors will receive a simplified version of the grazing scenario.
- Soil Interpretation: Juniors will receive a simplified version of the soil map and will only have to evaluate two soil series.
- Wildlife Habitat: No simplification.
- Plant Identification: Juniors will only have to identify and give the lifecycle of the plants numbered 1-15.

SCORE CARD NOTES

Grassland Condition: Question no. 3, "Matching Livestock & Forage". The answer to this question must be within ten pounds (10 lbs) of the final correct answer determined by the judges. Arkansas soil test reports will be used for this contest.

Soil Interpretation: Contestants will determine "soil slope" from designated stakes located at or near the "soils" site. Elevations will not be given.

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Plant Identification: This part of the contest involves two answers (common name and life cycle) for each of the twenty-five plants. Both answers must be correct for the question to be considered correct. If the plant falls in both life cycle categories, either one or both can be marked to be considered correct.

AWARDS

The following awards will be given in the Junior, Senior, and FFA Divisions.

- 1st-3rd Overall Team
- 1st-3rd Overall High Point Individual

In case of a tie in team or individual overall scores, ties will be broken in the following manner:

1. Higher Plant Identification score
2. Higher Grassland Condition score
3. Higher Wildlife Habitat score

The five highest scoring teams (FFA &/or 4-H) will be eligible to represent Arkansas at the Mid-America Grassland Evaluation Contest in Springfield, MO. Pending available funding the state will provide stipends for the top 3 4-H teams to cover registration and lodging

- Up to \$1000 for the first place 4-H team.
- Up to \$750 for the second place 4-H team.
- Up to \$500 for the third place 4-H team.

RESOURCES

The scantron used for the contest will be Missouri Grassland Evaluation Form #602MO-3.

<https://www.judgingcard.com/ScanSheets/samples/602MO-3-Grassland.pdf>

To prepare for the contest, teams should use the Grassland Evaluation Contest Study Guide 16th Edition revised September 2024.

<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/624e42e8bd8b0c53a7d13899/t/66e073280ca95f5db6ec86a0/1725985578486/StudyGuide+Edition+16TH.pdf>

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