

Date: February 9, 2026

To: 4-H Poultry Project Members and Leaders

From: Kayla Mitchell, Program Coordinator, 4-H Youth Development

Re: 2026 Poultry Project Important Information and Updates

This is a quick update on the events that will take place for the 2026 fair season within the poultry department. Should you have questions, feel free to contact the MSU Extension office at 269-467-5511. Please note that the information contained in this letter is subject to change.

NEW for 2026:

- A completed **Poultry Project Record Sheet** will be required to submit at the time of evaluation. The record sheet will be available on the website at https://www.canr.msu.edu/st_joseph/4-h/4_h_livestock#poultry by May 23.
- We encourage all breeding stock poultry to be loaded out on Saturday, September 26, from 11:00 p.m. to midnight to get the barn cleaned. If necessary, they may also be loaded out on Sunday, September 27, but must be gone by 6:00 a.m.
 - The St. Joseph County Grange Fair will **NOT** require loadout to be done by 11:00 a.m. on Sunday, September 27. There will not be fireworks or rides operating that day.
 - ALL YOUTH/CLUBS are still expected to be at barn clean up at 5:30 a.m. on Sunday to tear down gates and clean specie barns (this includes power washing the poultry barns at 6:00 a.m. if it is not completed Saturday night).



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Reminders:

- The 4-H Poultry Show will be on **Sunday, September 20, 2026**, Time TBD, we are working with Rabbits to offset the shows a little more than last year. All livestock superintendents/assistants and the 4-H Horse Council will work together with the 4-H Program Coordinator to ensure a smooth show day for all.
- **Hatch dates:** Turkey = Saturday, May 23, 2026; Chickens = Saturday, August 1, 2026
- **Turkey Vaccination/Tagging** dates have been set for Sunday, July 19, 2026, 5:00-7:00 p.m., and Monday, July 20, 2025, 5:00-7:00 p.m. at the St. Joseph County Fairgrounds. As in the past, all turkeys on the premises are required to be vaccinated. Please remember to bring ALL turkeys on the property where turkeys are housed to be vaccinated for Fowl Pox. All Turkeys that will be exhibited at the St. Joseph County Fair, **MUST** attend one of the above dates. There will NOT be any other available dates or times. **Proof of Purchase and Pullorum papers are required AND due at the time of vaccination. NO EXCEPTIONS! Wing banding will take place at the same time and place as the vaccinations for 2026.**

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- **Breeding stock chickens** may, but are not required to, get the Fowl Pox vaccine at the same time as the turkeys on Sunday, July 19, 2026, 5:00-7:00 p.m., or Monday, July 20, 2026, 5:00-7:00 p.m. If you choose to vaccinate your breeding stock chickens at that time, please be sure to bring ALL of your breeding stock at the same time. Cost is free to 4-H members.
- **Chickens - Breeding Stock, Market and Waterfowl Countywide Banding/Tagging & Registration** is Sunday, August 23, 2026, 4:00-7:00 p.m., and Monday, August 24, 2026, 4:00-7:00 p.m. at the St. Joseph County Fairgrounds. Pigeons must be registered on these dates, but will not be tagged.
- All exhibitors of **pigeons** will be required to leave their pigeons on exhibit throughout the entire fair week. Each exhibitor will be responsible for providing feed, watering, and care for their pigeons.
- **Breeding stock turkeys:** exhibitors may tag up to four (4) breeding stock turkeys, but may only exhibit up to two (2); one male and one female. Turkeys must go through all vaccination procedures according to the market turkey project and be at least 8 weeks old at the time of vaccination. Turkeys shown in the Breeding Stock class **MUST** be taken home and are NOT eligible for auction. Turkeys shown in the Breeding Stock class may include Heritage Turkeys or Production Turkeys. See the St. Joseph County 4-H, FFA, and Other Youth Fair Book for additional rules and regulations under Department 12.
- A **Poultry Project Study Guide** is available on the 4-H website at https://www.canr.msu.edu/st_joseph/4-h/4_h_livestock#poultry to study for the evaluation.
- Breeding stock turkey and chicken exhibitors will be required to pay \$2.00 per pen for feed and bedding costs at the time of check-in.
- **All 4-H livestock members/clubs** will be held responsible for setting up their project pen/stall and decorations before fair, as well as cleaning and tearing down their project pen/stall at the end of fair. Individuals or clubs may be assessed a \$50.00 fine for failure to do so. This will be enforced!
- If you do not have a Poultry Leader in your 4-H club, please contact another club and enroll in that club for the Poultry Project.

(Important dates, deadlines, and events calendar on page 3)

Important dates, deadlines, and events:

| Event or Deadline | Date(s) | Comments |
|--|--|---|
| Turkey Hatch Date | Saturday, May 23 | Recommend ordering birds right away |
| Vaccination/Tagging for Turkeys | Sunday, July 19, 5:00-7:00 p.m. or Monday, July 20, 5:00-7:00 p.m. | * Will be held at the fairgrounds in the poultry barns. Note: Breeding stock chickens may also be vaccinated but are <i>not</i> required. |
| Chicken Hatch Date | Saturday, August 1 | Recommend ordering birds right away |
| Poultry Clinic | Date and time TBD | |
| Chickens - Breeding Stock and Market, along with Waterfowl Countywide Banding/Tagging & Registration | Sunday, August 23, 4:00-7:00 p.m. or Monday, August 24, 4:00-7:00 p.m. | * Will be held at the fairgrounds at the poultry barns. All poultry animals except turkeys and pigeons. |
| Fair weigh-in/check-in | Friday, September 18, 4:00-7:00 p.m. | Animals MUST be clean and dry! No cardboard boxes allowed. |
| 4-H Poultry Project Evaluation | <u>Saturday</u> , September 19, 2:00-6:00 p.m. Poultry Barns | Sign up for times at Friday check-in Required for ALL exhibitors! |
| 4-H Poultry Show | Sunday, September 20, Time, TBD | Show schedule TBD |
| 4-H Small Animal Sale | Thursday, September 24, 10:00 a.m. in the Henningsen Show Arena | Order of sale: rabbits, goats, turkeys, chickens |
| Market Animal Load-out | Saturday, September 26, 10:00 p.m. | All members/clubs <u>must</u> be present! Breeding stock must be removed by 6:00 a.m. on Sunday. |
| Breeding Stock Load-out | Saturday, September 27, 11:00 p.m. or Sunday, September 27, 6:00 a.m. | |
| Barn Clean-up: Power Washing Chicken and Turkey Barns and Cages | Saturday, September 26, after market loadout AND check back Sunday, September 27, at 6:00 a.m. | |