

Erath County 4-H Youth Fair

2026 Rules & Guidelines

Red Text = New or Changed Rules

SCHEDULE

ALL entries will be submitted and paid for via Fair Entry (see link in General Rules Section)!

Friday, December 5, 2025 – ENTRIES and FEES DUE by 5:00 p.m.

Friday, December 5, 2025 – DEADLINE to submit digital photos (for all Photography entries-NO LATE PHOTOGRAPHY ENTRIES WILL BE ACCEPTED)

Friday, December 12, 2025 – LATE ENTRIES DUE WITH ADDITIONAL FEE (except photography)

Tuesday, January 6, 2025

- 7:00 a.m. – 9:00 a.m. – Check-in for Arts & Crafts and Shop Art Categories
- 10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. – Judging
- 12:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m. – Showmanship Contest (Tentative Schedule)
- 4:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m. – All items must be picked up. *Qualifying items (1st – 6th place) must be returned to the Fair on Thursday, January 9th between 7am-9am if planning to auction.*

Thursday, January 8, 2025

- **7:00 a.m. – 9 a.m.** – Check-in for Foods Category prior to judging and qualifying items of Arts & Crafts and Shop Art (1st – 6th place items) that are being auctioned.
- **9:30 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.** – Judging of Foods Category with Top 6 advancing to Silent Auction
- **12pm-Online/Facebook Silent Auction Bidding Closes (NO FOODS ENTRIES INCLUDED IN ON-LINE SILENT AUCTION)**
- **12pm-In-Person Silent Auction Open for All Categories**
- **4:00pm (or 1 hour after End of Swine Show, whichever comes first)** – In-Person Silent Auction Closed
- 4:30 p.m. – 5:15 p.m. – Buyers must pay for and pick up items won in auction
- 5:15 p.m. – 5:30 p.m. – Calls made to 2nd name on bid sheets for pick up and payment
- 6:00 p.m. – Remaining Silent Auction items must be picked up by exhibitor

AGE DIVISIONS

Clover Kids: K – 2nd (Non-competitive basis – participation ribbon only. Not eligible for Showmanship competition)

Junior: 3rd – 5th grade

Intermediate: 6th – 8th grade

Senior: 9th – 12th grade

GENERAL RULES

- Entry fees are **\$6.00** per item
- Entries and fees are **due on FairEntry** <https://erathcounty4-hyouthfair.fairentry.com/Fair/SignIn/22980> **on Friday, December 5th by 11:59 p.m.**
 - All photography entries must be submitted **digitally** by 11:59 p.m. on **Friday, December 5th through Fair Entry.**
 - Late entries (except photography) will be accepted until **Friday, December 12th** with a late fee of \$30.00 per entry.
- Entry fees must be paid online at Fair Entry as part of the entry process. **YOU ARE NOT ENTERED UNTIL PAYMENT IS FINALIZED!**
- Only one entry per class per exhibitor allowed
- All entries must be the original work of the exhibitor
- All entries must have been made within the past year by the 4-H member
- Entries cannot have been entered in a previous Erath 4-H Youth Fair, regardless of placing. Entries not adhering to this rule **WILL BE DISQUALIFIED.**
- Entries must adhere to size requirements and additional requirements specified in each category; entries not adhering to this rule **WILL BE DISQUALIFIED.**
- During judging, names will not be displayed
 - Each entry will be given a number
 - Names will be displayed after judging
- **ITEM INFO CARD** must accompany **ALL** items at check-in
 - Cards must be completed **PRIOR** to check-in. **No on-site cards will be provided during check-in!**
 - Cards may be typed or hand-written
 - Print copies of the Item Info cards may be picked up at the extension office anytime from **November 1-December 30th** and will also be available to download and print at <https://erath.agrilife.org>.
- This is a 4-H Youth Fair, open to currently enrolled Erath County 4-H members only
 - There will be a standard academic eligibility check as in any 4-H competitive event. Students who are ineligible per school guidelines will not be eligible to show.
 - **Exhibitors not enrolled for the current 4-H year will not be able to complete their entries on FairEntry until their enrollment is complete**

and approved. Please plan to complete this ahead of the deadline so your entry will go through in time!

- All Youth Fair exhibitors are encouraged to do at least one of the following:
 - Sell raffle tickets during the Youth Fair/Show (proceeds go to the Erath County United Way)
 - Help before, during, and after Silent Auction on Thursday, January 8th
- It is the responsibility of the exhibitor to read the 2026 Rules & Guidelines
- It is the responsibility of the exhibitor to ensure entry is properly checked-in
 - Exhibitor DOES NOT have to be present to check-in item, but parents must ensure the entry is checked-in properly and accounted for.

PRIZES

- Monetary prizes will be awarded to 1st – 3rd place in each category (additional places may be awarded prize money as funds allow)
- Ribbons will be awarded to the top 6 places
- Best of Show will be awarded in each Division (Arts & Crafts, Foods, Shop Art, and Photography). Best of Show winners will receive an additional award based on overall best appearance and most unique presentation. Best of Show winners will also be recognized before the JLSEC Sale on Saturday evening (exhibitor may bring item to the sale but is not required).
- Monetary prize amounts will be dependent on number of entries and sponsors
- Youth Fair prize money will NOT be available the day of the event. Money will be available for pick-up at the Extension Office once sponsorship and silent auction funds have been processed. Exhibitors will be notified via email when funds are ready for disbursement.

SILENT AUCTION

- ONLY 1st – 6th place items qualify to participate in the Silent Auction
- Silent Auction will be held on Thursday, January 8th from the conclusion of Foods Judging (around noon) – **4:00pm OR 1 HOUR AFTER THE SWINE SHOW ENDS (whichever comes first)**
- Buyers must pay for and pick up items between 4:30 p.m. – 5:15 p.m. on Thursday
 - At 5:15 p.m., second bid names will be called to pay and pick up item by 5:45 p.m. Items remaining at 6:00 must be collected by the youth exhibitor.
- All proceeds from Silent Auction will go to the youth who entered the item
- Youth **must** write a thank you note to their buyer and bring it, a copy, or email a picture to the Extension Office prior to receiving their proceeds from the auction

- Any silent auction money left at the office after the announced pick-up due date will revert back to the 4-H Youth Fair account
- Clovers may participate in Silent Auction
- Online Silent Auction will be held on Facebook beginning after judging ends for Shop Art and Arts and Crafts on Tuesday January 6th. Beginning bids may be made on the Facebook page if they meet the participant's minimum bid (where applicable). Online bids will close by 12pm on Thursday, January 8th; all bids made after this time will need to be made in person, along with arrangements for payment and pickup. NO FOODS ENTRIES WILL BE INCLUDED IN THE ONLINE/FACEBOOK SILENT AUCTION (THESE BIDS MUST BE MADE IN-PERSON ON THURSDAY).

SUPERINTENDENTS

The following volunteered to serve as Youth Fair Superintendents:

- General Superintendent – DeAnna Powell
 - Responsible for overseeing placement of items, security, check-in, silent auction check-out, etc.
- Category Superintendents –
 - Arts & Crafts – Shannon Buchanan
 - Foods – Denae Dorris and Soncee Heard
 - Photography – Elizabeth Starnes
 - Shop Art - Amber Parks
 - Silent Auction – Katrina Brister
 - Category Superintendents are responsible for:
 - Overseeing check-in, placement and display of items in their category
 - Reviewing items at check-in to confirm proper category, age group, placement, adherence to rules & guidelines, size limitations, etc.
 - Overseeing placement of ribbons in their category
 - Coordinating silent auction pick-ups
 - Working with General Superintendent to secure judges for their category

ARTS & CRAFTS

- All Arts & Crafts will be judged on Tuesday, January 6th
- Items must be checked-in between 7:00 a.m. and 9:00 a.m. on Tuesday, Jan. 6th
- All items must be picked up before 5:30 p.m. on Tuesday following judging; early pickup is permitted immediately following judging, but please check the item out with a supervising attendant before taking it with you to ensure it's accounted for.

- ONLY 1st – 6th place items and Clover Items qualify to participate in the Silent Auction
- 1st – 6th place items must be checked in on Thursday between 7:00 a.m. – 9 a.m. if participating in the Silent Auction
- All Silent Auction items that did not sell must be picked up on Thursday at 6:00 p.m.
- Items created from a “kit” are allowed, but HIGHLY DISCOURAGED and will be judged accordingly

CLASSES

- **Drawings** – all hand created with any drawing tool (pencil, charcoal, pastels, etc.). Work created with pencil, charcoal, or pastel should be sprayed with fixative to avoid smearing. NO BRUSHWORK allowed in this category (ex. watercolor pencils that have been wet and brushed to resemble painting). All artwork needs to be matted or on stretched canvas. Size limitations: no work larger than 18 inches x 24 inches including the mat.
- **Paintings** – all hand created with paint brush and medium (acrylic, watercolor, etc.). All artwork needs to be matte or on stretched canvas. Size limitations: no work larger than 18 inches x 24 inches including the mat.
- **Recycled Arts and Crafts** –includes any item made mostly or completely from a recycled or repurposed item and constructed into a new item. Please state on your entry card what the original item was and your process and inspiration for constructing this new item.
- **Textiles** – includes any item made from cloth, fiber, leather, etc. Please state on your entry card if you created your item from a pattern or if this was a freeform creation.
- **Open** – for any arts & crafts item that are created but do not fit in the above subcategories. This could include, but is not limited to, sculptures, floral arrangements, 3-D art, candles, paper crafts, or items made from household materials like Legos, popsicle sticks, straws, clay, mason jars, soap, etc. that would not otherwise qualify for the recycled arts and crafts category. **No digital art is permitted for the 2026 Show Year.**
 - **Open Small** – items must fit into a 24 in x 24 in x 24 in cube.
 - **Open Large** – no size limit

FOODS

- All Foods will be judged on Thursday, January 8th, 2026.
- Items must be checked-in between 7:00 a.m. and 9 a.m. on Thursday, January 9th.
- ONLY 1st – 6th place items qualify to participate in the Silent Auction

- Foods entries entering the silent auction must be bid on in-person (No online bids accepted!)
- Top 6 placings from each age group will be placed in the Silent Auction unless otherwise instructed (please indicate at check-in if you want to auction or not!)
- All food items must be made from scratch
 - No mixes allowed!
- All food items must include the recipe used to make the item
- All food entries **must be submitted on a disposable plate (Youth Fair committee is not responsible for ensuring plates or carriers are returned, and items for sale will be sold with the plate they arrive on).**
- All food entries **must include a judge's sample on a separate plate and covered with plastic wrap**
 - Judge's sample may come from entry, but it is encouraged to keep entry whole if placing item in Silent Auction
- For food safety reasons, food items that require temperature control (including cream and custard pies) will NOT be allowed
 - For a list of allowed items and regulations to follow, **please see the following page on permissible/impermissible items. This list will be strictly adhered to in the 2026 Show Year.**
 - **Recipes may be submitted to the office prior to December 15th for approval and to avoid disqualification. If you have any questions on food entry rules, please contact Andrea Brooks at the extension office.**
- Items in this category will be judged based on both appearance and taste, as well as difficulty of execution as relevant to the category.
- All Silent Auction items that did not sell must be picked up on Thursday at 6:00 p.m. Items remaining after this point will be discarded.

CLASSES

- **Desserts** – brownies, drop cookies, bar cookies, cakes, etc.
- **Candy** – brittle, praline, hard candy, fudge, sugar work, etc.
- **Decorated Desserts** – fondant cakes, gingerbread houses, royal icing, cupcakes, etc.
- **Breads** – quick or yeast, savory or sweet
- **Pies** – fruit, savory, etc.
- **Snacks** – crackers, trail mix, granola, flavored popcorn, etc.

Perishable Foods

Perishable foods are those with custard, cream cheese, cream type fillings and frostings, or foods that require refrigeration. These foods are not recommended for entry or exhibits in local fairs or shows.

Icings and frostings made with raw eggs are not recommended. The use of raw eggs in any uncooked product is also not recommended. This is to reduce the risk of *Salmonella*, which is another bacterium that can cause foodborne illness. Egg white rinses brushed on **before** baking are safe. Consider replacing raw shell eggs with pasteurized eggs, if needed.

Fruit and pecan pies can be acceptable if made from a traditional recipe using eggs, sugars, and no added water or milk, and appropriately baked. Dairy products should be made from pasteurized milk.

Uncooked fruit garnishes should not be used. Instead, use candied fruit garnishes.

Sour Cream, Cream, and Cream Cheeses

If the sour cream or cream cheese is mixed in and fully cooked, it is considered safe. This means mixed in—not layered in or as a filling. The water activity and moisture content of the food increases in layers and fillings made from sour cream or cream cheese. Even if the ingredient is baked or part of a batter, foodborne pathogens can still grow in foods with higher water activity and moisture content.

Frostings with heavy cream should not be used because there is not enough sugar in the recipe to prevent bacterial growth and would require refrigeration. Frostings with cream cheese should not be used unless the recipe has a water activity of less than 0.85 as tested by an approved food testing lab. These recommendations are for cakes, cupcakes, cookies, brownies, and other baked goods.

Flour

In most cases, flour is a raw food and not ready-to-eat. There are heat-treated flours available. Nevertheless, remember to avoid contamination of a finished product by following safe handling procedures with flour. This could be a concern with No-Bake entries that may contain raw flour.

Unsafe Baking Containers

Home-Style Canned Quick Breads or Baking in a Jar

Home-style canned quick breads baked in a wide mouth glass jar have been made popular over the internet and through social media. This is not recommended because inadequate heat treatment and favorable storage conditions (if the jar seals) could lead to the development of botulinum toxins. Additionally, canning jars are not tempered for oven use and not designed as bakeware. For these reasons, cooking any baked good in a jar is not recommended.

Baking in Bags

Brown paper bags from grocery stores are not appropriate for baking. They may not be sanitary, may cause fire, and can release toxic fumes from the glue, ink, or recycled materials.

Bake products in food-grade containers. Some pots may have lead-based glaze and should not be used.

Bake or Cook Your Baked Good Entries

Enter a food that is baked or cooked but does not require refrigeration. No-Bake recipes are not a baked product, and depending on the ingredients, could be unsafe if not refrigerated. Always read the rules for fair and livestock shows for specific details on entries.

Contestant Reminder

Always wash hands and food contact surfaces before preparing the entries, and do not prepare entries when ill. Transport entries in a way that entries will not be contaminated.

Additional information

- https://nchfp.uga.edu/publications/nchfp/tech_bull.html
- <https://food.unl.edu/food-safety-0>
- <https://store.extension.iastate.edu/product/Foods-for-Iowa-4-H-Pairs-Quick-Reference-Guide>

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Material sourced from Karen Blakeslee, Food Safety Recommendations for Food Preservation Exhibits, Kansas State University, March 2019. For original & full version go to: <https://www.bookstore.ksre.ksu.edu/pubs/4H712.pdf> and So Easy to Preserve, University of Georgia, 6th Edition



FOOD SAFETY
EDUCATION
A COLLABORATIVE EFFORT

PHOTOGRAPHY

- All photography entries must be submitted digitally by 11:59p.m. on Friday, December 5th on Fair Entry <https://erathcounty4-hyouthfair.fairentry.com/Fair/SignIn/22980>. They will be judged prior to Youth Fair.
 - District 8 Contest Participation-The 2025 Youth Fair will serve as the Erath County Photography Contest, and qualifying winning entries will automatically be submitted to the District 8 Contest in appropriate/available categories. All categories have been updated to reflect current District 8 categories for Junior/Intermediate Entries (please note Juniors will have fewer categories available at District than at the County Contest). Senior participants will have additional opportunities to submit photos later in the Spring, and can contact Thomas Boyle, 4-H Agent, to make these arrangements prior to the Spring District deadline.
- 1st – 6th place winners will be notified via email
- 1st – 6th place winners' photos **will be included in a slide show display from 12-6pm on Thursday January 8th, next to the Silent Auction area. No photos will be printed, except for the Best of Show entry.**
- Photography entries will NOT be eligible for Silent Auction with the exception of the Best of Show winner. Best of Show entry will be printed and sold at auction.
**If you are unsure which category your entry best fits into PLEASE contact the office prior to the December 5th deadline and we will be happy to help you!
Otherwise, the category you enter on Fair Entry is where it will be judged.

CLASSES

- **Animals – Domestic/Wildlife** – Photos of Domesticated and undomesticated animals
- **Plant/Landscape/Nature** - Photos of outdoor scenic and natural settings without animals as the main focus. Examples: gardens, seascapes, cityscapes.
- **People** – Photos of individuals or groups across all ages and activities. Examples: Families, children, portraits, fashion, sports
- **Catch-All** – Photos that do not fit in any other category
- **Details/Macros** -Close-up photos highlighting fine details or making small objects appear larger than life. Examples: insect eyes, veins on a leaf, water droplets.
- **Elements of Design** - Photos emphasizing line, shape, pattern, form, texture, or perspective. Examples: repeating tile patterns, ripples in water designs showing repeating patterns, a spiral staircase showing perspective, textured bark on a tree, etc.
- **Catch All** - Photos that do not fit in any other category

- **Dominant Color** - Photos where one specific color is the primary visual element. Examples: a bowl of lemons in strong yellow light.
- **2026 Theme: Volunteers in Action - Celebrate the heart of Texas 4-H by capturing volunteers in meaningful moments of service. From mentoring youth and leading workshops to organizing events and supporting communities, showcasing the dedication, passion, and behind-the-scenes efforts of 4-H volunteers who make a difference every day.**

SHOP ART

- All Arts & Crafts will be judged on Tuesday, January 6th.
- Items must be checked-in between 7:00 a.m. and 9:00 a.m. on Tuesday, Jan. 6th.
- All items must be picked up before 5:30 p.m. on Tuesday following judging
- ONLY 1st – 6th place items qualify to participate in the Silent Auction
- 1st – 6th place items must be checked in on Thursday between 7:00 a.m. – 9a.m. if participating in Silent Auction
- All Silent Auction items that did not sell must be picked up by the exhibitor on Thursday at 6:00 p.m.
- Items created from a “kit” are allowed, but HIGHLY DISCOURAGED and will be judged accordingly.

CLASSES

- **Woodworking** – items made from wood (bookends, shelves, birdhouses, wood carving, etc.)
 - **Small**- Item must fit in a 24x24x24 inch cube
 - **Large**- no size limit
- **Plasma Metal Art** – items made from metal using a plasma cutter/welder. Two types of Plasma Metal Art will be judged:
 - **Computer Cut**
 - **Hand Cut**
- **Traditional Metal Art** – items made from metal using a mig or stick/arc welder
- **Open** – items made using other materials (pvc pipe, wire, rubber, etc.) or a combination of materials
 - **Open Small** – items must fit into a 48 in x 48 in x 48 in cube
 - **Open Large** – no size limit

SHOWMANSHIP

- Showmanship will be judged on Tuesday, January 6th.
- Youth will be assigned a time slot between 12:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m (schedule tentative based on number of entries received). Assigned times will be sent via email by December 29th.
- Youth may enter showmanship for their respective age division ONCE, regardless of how many total entries are submitted
- Youth may pick one item to submit in showmanship contest from any Youth Fair category
 - Item must be already entered in Youth Fair
 - For food items, a separate item must be made and presented for showmanship and the foods contest on Thursday
- Youth must provide a binder with details of their project, and steps they took to complete it. If they have questions on this, they may contact the County Extension Office for assistance.
 - This may include but is not limited to pictures, design plans, textile patterns, supply expenses, time spent, help received, etc.
 - Exhibitor must bring the binder with them for their judging interview, and take it with them when they complete the interview. **NO BINDERS WILL BE PERMITTED ON ITEM DISPLAY TABLES OR AT SILENT AUCTION.**
- Exhibitor and Item will be judged for Showmanship by a separate group of judges from the category judging
 - Exhibitor – appearance, knowledge, presentation and self-demeanor
 - Item – finish and quality, degree of difficulty, documentation
- One winner from each age division (Junior, Intermediate, and Senior) will be selected and presented with a showmanship belt buckle
- Announcement of winners will be given at the JLSEC sale on Saturday January 10th.