

## 4-H Prep Policy

The New Jersey 4-H Youth Development Program includes programming for children in first through third grade, known as the 4-H Prep members. It is recognized that 4-H Prep programs require age-appropriate components based on developmental abilities and needs, and that programs should be activity-focused and not project focused. The 4-H Prep program is designed to introduce youth in 1st, 2nd and 3rd grades to the wide variety of 4-H project experiences which are available to them upon reaching 4th grade. Prep members will also:

- Learn to get along with others
- Explore many interests
- Learn subject matter skills
- Build self confidence through healthy experiences

Following the policies established by National 4-H Headquarters, the NJ 4-H Youth Development Program policy on 4-H Prep membership are:

- 4-H Prep membership is open to all youth in Grade 1 through Grade 3.
- It is preferred that 4-H Prep-age youth be enrolled in 4-H Prep Clubs (grades 1-3) that provide activity-based experiences for a variety of projects or subject matter. Some 4-H Prep Clubs may focus on a particular subject or project but should still provide a variety of activities instead of long-term projects.
- 4-H Prep members enrolled in Standard 4-H Project Clubs must have separate age-appropriate activities and an assigned, trained volunteer and/or teen leader to work with this age group.
- Leaders of 4-H clubs that enroll 4-H prep members (whether they are 4-H Prep Clubs or 4-H Standard Project Clubs) are required to receive additional training to work with these members. Training must be conducted by county 4-H staff using state approved training materials.
- 4-H Prep members may participate in non-competitive exhibits, showcases, demonstrations, or group activities. Members may receive participatory ribbons and/or other items that recognize participation.
- 4-H Prep members may NOT participate in any state 4-H events.

4-H Prep members and animals.

- 4-H Prep members should not have ON-GOING projects, of any kind – including animal projects – nor should they participate as competitive exhibitors with animals – large or small, because within the 4-H program, shows are intended to showcase the culmination of a long-term project.
- The handling of animals (large and small) requires discipline and motor skills that may not yet be fully developed in prep-age children. Coupled with the unpredictable behavior of animals, working with animals may not provide an optimal safe educational environment. Therefore, it is highly recommended that 4-H Prep members do NOT work directly with animals in an ON-GOING project.
- In the event that 4-H Prep members work with animals through educational activities and are enrolled in 4-H animal science project clubs, they are encouraged to use project animals registered by “standard” 4-H club members, preferably siblings.
- For safety, should 4-H Prep members participate in hands-on activities, exhibitions, or demonstrations which involve animals, they should use an animal with which they have experience.
- For a variety of reasons including the healthy and safety of the animal, 4-H Prep members may be permitted to register an animal that will only be used for a hands-on activity, exhibition, or demonstration; not an ON-GOING project.

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*Cooperating Agencies:* Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and County Boards of Chosen Freeholders. Rutgers Cooperative Extension, a unit of the Rutgers New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station, is an equal opportunity program provider and employer.