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College of Agricultural, Consumer
and Environmental Sciences

Agricultural Science Fair

CONTEST DATE: Saturday, September 12, 2026

Contest Registration Due: Friday, August 28, 2026

Online Contest Registration links and fee portal links are on NMSU Agricultural Contests link: <https://extension.nmsu.edu/internships/competitions.html>

Contest Superintendent: TBA

Contest Coordinator: Dr. Frannie Miller, franniem@nmsu.edu; (575) 646-1162 office; (575) 636-9305 cell. New Mexico State University, Department of Agricultural Economics and Agricultural Business.

This contest is subject to the New Mexico State Fair (NMSF) General Rules and Regulations and to the Special Rules of this section. Where Special Rules conflict with other rules, Special Rules prevail.

Any dispute or issue with the contest or the rules laid out below will be presented to the Contest Superintendent, who may consult with members of the New Mexico Agricultural Public Speaking Committee in attendance. Their decisions will be final.

Special Rules for Agricultural Science Fair

1. **Entry Fee:** An entry fee of \$5 made payable to NMSU will be charged. Entry fees can be paid online at registration. If necessary, they may be paid upon check-in.
Note: Access to NMSF and parking are not included in this fee. Exhibitor parking and access may be purchased through the NMSF website.
2. Entries **MUST** be submitted by the link available on the NMSF website by 11:59 pm of the deadline, early entries are encouraged. **Successfully submitted entries will receive a confirmation email.** If no confirmation email is received, it is the contestant's responsibility to contact the contest Superintendent on the following day to make alternate submission arrangements. A sent email with time stamp may be required for proof of submission by deadline.
3. **Eligibility:** This contest is open to New Mexico students, ages 8 (and in 3rd grade) to 18 years of age (and still in high school) as of January 1, 2026 and are enrolled in, and attending, public or private elementary or secondary schools in New Mexico (including verified home school).
4. The age divisions are as follows, with age as of January 1 2026:
We reserve the right to adjust divisions to balance the number of participants in each age division.
 - **Novice Division:** 8 years old in the 3rd grade, 9 years old, 10 years old, or 11 years old in the 5th grade;
 - **Junior Division:** 11 years old in the 6th grade; 12 years old; 13 years old in the 7th grade;
 - **Senior Division:** 13 years old in the 8th grade; 14-18 years old.

5. **Entry Limitation:** An individual is allowed only one entry, either as a team or as an individual. An entry must be the result of a participant's own effort and ability. There is no limit to the number of entries a chapter or club may submit.
6. **Project Exhibition:** The project must have been researched and developed within one (1) calendar year of the exhibition date. If the project is a continuation of a multi-year study, the participant's focus for research, display and presentation must center on the most recent year's data. A successive year project must indicate change or growth in the project from the previous year(s) in the log book.
7. **Judging Criteria:** Judging is similar to the criteria set forth in the National FFA Organization Agriscience Fair Rules. See <https://www.ffa.org/participate/awards/agriscience-fair/>
8. **Team vs. Individual** - There will be separate rubrics for team and individual entries, with an equal amount of points available. There are not separate categories for teams or individuals.
9. **Documentation:** Each contestant must complete the following items in advance to be eligible for competition. The forms below are to ensure participant safety and ethical treatment of any non-human vertebrates involved in the research. The completion of these forms, including signature, must precede the initiation of any experiments to be conducted.
 - a. Documentation to accompany the online entry worksheet must be submitted by the Science or Agriculture Teacher or Cooperative Extension Agent, deadline for online entry is August 22.
 - i. Hazardous Materials Waiver Form (if applicable)
 - ii. Non-Human Vertebrate Endorsement (if applicable)
 - iii. Adult Sponsor Safety Assessment Form
 - iv. Release of Liability and Indemnity
 - b. **Contestants are required to enter online using the link on the NMSF website and then must submit the following documentation as one pdf file by email to nmyouth@nmsu.edu by August 28. The documentation can be submitted online by the exhibitor, parent/legal guardian, or Science/Agriculture Teacher or Cooperative Extension Agent.**
 - c. Participants' work should be saved as a pdf. File naming should follow this format: "NMSF26science_Contestant Name_AgeDivision.pdf" **Participants failing to submit the required documentation by the deadline of August 28 are ineligible to compete.** Documents submitted will be checked for originality and any incidence of plagiarism using Turnitin™ software. Any submission with an alert of 30% similarity will be evaluated and may be disqualified. Submitted documents should include:
 - i. Abstract
 - ii. Written Manuscript
 - iii. Log listing dates of each research element (Remember, any experiments conducted should occur after the signature date of documentation listed in 9.a)
 - iv. List of References in APA format (a list of citation guides is available at <https://nmsu.libguides.com/citingyoursources/APA>).

If the contestant does not follow the guidelines outlined above, point deductions may be taken at the discretion of the Contest Superintendent, Agri-Science Committee, Show Management, and Judges.

10. Contest Format:

- a. **Divisions:** Contestants will compete in either the Novice, Junior, or Senior Division. Projects will **NOT** be judged separately by topic.
- b. **Display:**
 - i. All exhibits must have the following information attached to the project display:
 - 1. Name of participant
 - 2. Chapter/Club/School name
 - 3. Division entered (e.g. junior or senior)
 - ii. Personal electronic devices (such as iPads, tablets, computers and other WiFi devices) can only be used as part of a contestant's project with prior written approval of the Contest Superintendent.
 - iii. The maximum size for a project display is 48" wide by 30" deep by 108" high (from floor to top of display, including table). Tables will be provided by NMSU.
 - iv. Wall mountings are prohibited. All displays must stand on or lie flat on a table. Failure to meet these requirements can result in disqualification.
 - v. Displays requiring electricity should have their own internal power supply that must be approved in advance of the contest and are subject to the discretion of the contest coordinator and/or contest committee. Electricity will **NOT** be provided by the NMSF or NMSU. All prescribed safety regulations of the NMSF will be followed.
- c. **Rounds:** If there are more than 10 entries in an age category, the judging will be split into two rounds, a preliminary round and a final round.
 - i. Preliminary judging will be done by groups. Projects will be assigned into a judging group. Contestants **MUST** compete in their assigned groups. Changes may only be approved by the Contest Superintendent or Show Management. The top scoring projects in each group will advance to the final round, so that the final round includes ten finalists. Upon arrival, contestants will be randomly assigned to a specific group.
- d. **Presentation:** Each project display will be allocated a maximum of 10 minutes for judging. This time will begin with a 2 minute opening presentation followed by judges' questions. Judges do not have to use the entire time, but questions and answers will be stopped at 10 minutes of total time.
- e. **Waiting area:** During the preliminary round, contestants will wait in the designated area during judging until called in by the judges to explain their research project and address questions from judges. Exceptions may be approved by contest officials.
- f. **Attire:** Contestants should be in presentable attire. Business attire or official 4-H/FFA attire is recommended.

- 11. Presentation Schedule Conflict:** Participants with conflicts due to participation in other NMSF events held on the same day of the contest will need to notify the Contest Superintendent during project set-up to arrange a presentation time. Once the contest begins, it is the responsibility of each contestant to notify the Contest Superintendent should a conflict arise with their assigned presentation time.

12. **Presentation Area and Admission:** Participants will be notified Exact contest start time and location will bey email by September 4, 2026 using the email on the entry form. All participants and accompanying family will need to purchase fair admission and parking through the NMSF website for exhibitors.

13. **Public Viewing:**

- a. Only contest officials, judges, and participants are allowed in the project presentation area during the preliminary round of project judging.
- b. During the final round judging, the general public may be allowed in the judging area and seated in a designated location. The public is NOT allowed to ask questions or comment during the final judging round.
- c. A public reception may occur after judging. Participants should be available at their displays to answer questions about their research project from interested members of the public. This will be followed by the awards ceremony.

14. **Awards:**

- a. The award ceremony will follow the judging. Winners are required to be present to receive awards. Awards will not be mailed. Alternative arrangements can be made with approval from the Contest Superintendent.
- b. Team awards will be split. Buckles will be awarded based on a coin flip with a matching buckle ordered - arrangements can be made for obtaining the second buckle.
- c. The following prizes will be awarded for each Age Division:

<i>Place</i>	<i>Award</i>
1st Place	NMSU ACES Scholarship; Buckle
2nd Place	NMSU ACES Scholarship; Buckle

- d. **Tie Breaker:** In the event of a tie, the winner will be determined based on the score of the written project report. If a tie still exists, the tie will be broken on scores received from the participant presentation/project display.
- e. Winners of the event are invited to participate in the “Parade of Champions” to help promote the contest in future years. Please let committee know if you are available.

15. **Topic Areas:** Contestant projects must fit within one of the topic areas listed below: The topic area will not influence scoring, but are suggested to help participants focus their work in line with the mission of the contest.

f. Sustainable Bioeconomy:

- i. Studies related to production of renewable biological resources and the use of normally wasted byproducts as value added products. Participants interested in this topic may find additional information and resources at sbar.arizona.edu, which hosts a grant on which NMSU is collaborating.

Examples:

- Development of new uses for pecan hulls
- Evaluation of what encourages farmers to plant cover crops to increase soil health

g. Animal Systems:

- ii. A project in this category could include any life processes, such as health, nutrition, genetics, management, or processing, as related to the study of small animals, aquaculture, livestock, dairy, horses, and/or poultry.

Examples:

- Livestock nutritional advances
- Disease control strategies

h. Environmental and Natural Resource Systems:

- iii. The study of systems, instruments and technology used in natural resource management (the study of the management of soil, water, wildlife, forests, and air as natural resources) or the study of wastes or pollutants, and their influence on the environment.

Examples:

- Comparison of water delivery efficiency for different acequia maintenance levels
- Development and adoption of water treatment for produced water
- Innovative practices to promote soil health

i. Food Products and Processing Systems:

- iv. The study of product development, quality assurance, food safety, production, sales and service, regulation and government compliance, and food service delivery technologies within the food science industry.

Examples:

- Assessment of emerging microbial contaminants or other hazards
- The role of value-trait marketing of food products
- Enhancing food safety through improved processing technologies
- Development of food products with increased health benefits

j. Plant Systems:

- v. The study of plant life cycles, classifications, functions, structures, reproduction, growth media, and nutrients, as well as growth and development practices, through the study of crops, turf grass, trees and shrubs, and/or ornamental plants.

Examples:

- Enhancing water and nutrition efficiency of crop species
- Issues and challenges related to implementing cover crops
- Comparison of genetically-modified and conventional seed/plant growth under various conditions

k. Power, Structural and Technical Systems:

- vi. The study of agricultural equipment, power systems, alternative fuel sources and precision technology, as well as woodworking, metalworking, welding, or project planning for agricultural structures.

Examples:

- Assessing processes that allow for more efficient conversion of cellulose and hemicellulose to fuel
- Investigation of light/wind/water energy sources
- Adoption of precision agriculture

I. Social Systems:

- vii. The study of human behavior and the interaction of individuals in and to society, including agricultural education, agribusiness management, agricultural communication, agricultural leadership and other social science applications in agriculture, food, and natural resources.

Examples:

- Investigating perceptions of community members towards alternative agricultural practices
- Determining the economic impacts of local/state/national legislation and regulatory requirements
- Comparison of farming practices for improving sustainability or community economic security

16. **Eligibility of Previous Winners:** Winners of the Agriscience Fair at New Mexico State Fair are still eligible to present at SNMSF and the ENMSF. All Agriscience Projects must be developed within a year of presentation.
17. **Special Circumstances:** A majority vote of the New Mexico AgriScience Fair Committee in attendance, or the Contest Superintendent, has authority to make exceptions to rules when appealed with compelling situations.
18. **Resources:** Participants are encouraged to use their Cooperative Extension Service Agents, FFA Teachers, agricultural and natural resources professionals and New Mexico State University faculty as resources. While all work and research must be the participant's own, they are encouraged to network and learn from people who work in the area they are researching. For additional insight regarding project development or manuscript writing, visit:

<https://www.ffa.org/participate/awards/agriscience-fair/>

http://www.nmffa.org/uploads/4/1/0/7/41075673/agriscience_fair_tips_from_the_pros.pdf

The contest was created through work at NMSU Agricultural Economics & Agricultural Business Department with the support of Cooperative Extension Service.



All divisions were generously sponsored by AgTrust Farm Credit. Please let them know you appreciate their support of our amazing New Mexico youth!

AgTrust Farm Credit Services, 5600 Clearfork Main Street, Fort Worth, TX 76107