



Agricultural Public Speaking Contest

CONTEST DATE: Saturday, Sep 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 Public Speaking Contest

- 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.
- Entries must be submitted electronically using the link provided. **Successfully submitted entries will receive a confirmation.** 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 a timestamp may be required for proof of submission by deadline.
- Eligibility:** This contest is open to New Mexico students, within the age divisions below, enrolled in, and attending, public or private elementary or secondary schools in New Mexico (including verified home school). Contestants must be passing all subjects for the semester or grading period immediately preceding the contest, as certified by the school official on the entry form.
- 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, and 11 years old in the 5th grade
 - Junior Division:** 11 years old in the 6th grade; 12 years old; and 14 years old in the 8th grade
 - Senior Division:** 14 years old in the 9th grade and 14–18 years old and still in high school.

5. **Entry Limitation:** Contestants are limited to one (1) individual entry. An entry must be the result of a participant's own effort and ability. Team entries are **NOT** allowed. There is no limit to the number of entries a chapter or club may submit.
6. **Judging Criteria:** Judging is similar to the criteria set forth in the National FFA Organization and the New Mexico State 4-H Prepared Public Speaking criteria.
7. **Documentation:** Each contestant must submit the following items by the entry deadline to be eligible for competition:
 - i. Abstract
 1. The abstract will consist of 200-300 words.
 - ii. List of references in APA format
 1. A minimum of five references must be used and cited (A list of citation guides is available at <https://nmsu.libguides.com/citingyoursources/APA>.)
 - iii. Statement of originality
 1. This form must be signed by the contestant, parent/legal guardian, and a teacher or Cooperative Extension Agent and included within the submitted file.
 - a. Documentation should be saved as a pdf file. File naming should follow this format: "NMSF26speaking_Contestant Name_AgeDivision.pdf" **Participants failing to submit the required documentation by the deadline of August 28, 2026, are ineligible to compete.** Documents submitted may 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.

If the contestant does not follow the guidelines outlined above, point deductions will be taken at the discretion of the Contest Superintendent, Contest Committee, Show Management, or Judges.

8. **Contest Format:** The event will be conducted using the following format:
 - a. **Rounds:** If there are more than 20 entries, a preliminary round and a final round will be held.
 - b. Preliminary judging will be done by groups. Participants will be assigned into a judging group. Contestants **MUST** compete in their assigned groups. Changes may only be approved by the Contest Superintendent, Committee Members, or Show Management. The top scoring speeches in each group will advance to the final round, so that the final round includes ten finalists. The finalists in the Junior and Senior divisions will compete for overall division winner and placings within their respective divisions.
 - c. Contestants will randomly draw to determine the speaking order for the Final Round of judging on the second day. Final round contestants will be evaluated and ranked by judges without regard to topic area.
 - d. **Dress Attire:** Contestants should wear presentable attire. Business attire or Official 4-H or FFA attire is recommended.
 - e. **Time:** Each speech shall be timed.
 - i. Novice and Junior divisions:
 1. Speeches must be between 3 minutes and 7 minutes
 - ii. Senior division:
 1. Speeches must be between 6 and 8 minutes
 - iii. Time point deductions will apply as follows:

1. Under the minimum - one point per second.
 - a. Novices will not receive point deductions for speeches below the minimum, as long as their speech is longer than one minute.
 2. Over the maximum - one point per second.
 3. No time warnings will be given.
 - f. **Question/Answer Period:** Up to 3 minutes of a question-and-answer period will follow each speech. At the end of 3 minutes, time will be called, and all questioning will end. If time is called during the participant's answer to the last question, the contestant may complete his or her answer.
 - g. **Props:** The use of pets, signs, electronics, objects, or props of any kind are prohibited. A violation of this rule will result in contestant disqualification.
9. **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 check-in to arrange a presentation time. Once the contest begins, each contestant is responsible for notifying the Contest Superintendent should conflict arise with their assigned presentation time.
10. **Presentation Area:** The exact location will be announced by September 4, 2026. Participants will be notified the week before the event 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.** Additional instructions will be provided on the NMSU website
11. **Public Viewing:**
- a. If there are enough participants to hold a preliminary round, then only contest officials, judges, and participants are allowed in the presentation area during the preliminary round of public speaking judging. The committee reserves the right to adjust this as necessary.
 - b. Participants are **not** allowed to watch the other contestants in their age division.
 - c. During the final round judging, the public will 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.
 - d. A public reception and award ceremony will follow the judging.
12. **Awards:**
- a. The awards 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. Winners will also be announced and showcased during the NMSF livestock sale.
 - b. The following prizes will be awarded for each age division:

Place	Award
1st Place	NMSU ACES Scholarship; Buckle
2nd Place	NMSU ACES Scholarship; Buckle
 - c. **Tie Breaker:** In the event of a tie, the winner will be determined based on the number of low ranks. If a tie still exists, the tie will be broken on rankings of the question responses.

- d. Winners of the event are requested to attend the livestock sale for recognition and to help promote the contest in future years.
13. **Topic areas:** Contestants will NOT be judged by topic (i.e., animal science). The top contestants from each assigned group will advance to the final round. However, participants do need to select a topic. Final Round contestants will be evaluated and ranked by judges without regard to topic area.
- a. **Speech Topic Areas:** Each contestant will enter their speech in one of the topic areas listed below. The final determination of the contestant's speech topic area will be at the discretion of the Contest Superintendent, New Mexico Agricultural Public Speaking Committee, and/or Show Management.

Topic Areas:

- **Sustainable Bioeconomy:** Studies related to production of renewable biological resources and the use of normally wasted byproducts as value-added products.
 - **New Mexico Agricultural Heritage:** Any current or future subject that deals with topics such as New Mexico agricultural history and/or culture.
 - **Agri-Science Technology:** Any current or future subject that deals with topics such as biotechnology, biogenetics, bioengineering, mechanical engineering, new Agri-Technology applications, global positioning and other satellite technology, computer applications, or other agricultural innovations.
 - **Agricultural Advocacy/Leadership or Communication:** A subject that either advocates for agriculture, discusses methods of advocacy or how to communicate agricultural information to the public, or leadership in agriculture.
 - **Agribusiness or Agri-marketing:** Any current and future subject that deals with topics such as cooperatives, sales, service, entrepreneurship, marketing, finance, commodities, hedging, advertising, etc.
 - **Plant or Animal Science:** Any current or future subject that deals with any aspect(s) of livestock or specialty animal industries, animal science issues, New Mexico crops, agronomic sciences, or horticulture.
 - **Rural Economic Development:** Any current or future subject that deals with growing the rural economy of New Mexico or improving the livelihood of rural people and rural communities.
 - **Environment and Natural Resources:** Any current or future subject that deals with topics such as soil, water, air, water quality, wildlife, forestry, aquaculture, conservation, recreation, recycling, energy, or other environmental issues.
 - **Agricultural Policy:** Any current or future subject that deals with topics such as domestic farm issues or policies, legal issues, international trade, international competition, agricultural aid, or global food and fiber needs.
14. **Eligibility of Previous Winners:** Winners of the Agricultural Public Speaking at the New Mexico State Fair (NMSF) are still eligible to present at SNMSF and ENMSF. Each contest will have a different set of judges. Previous First (1st) and Second (2nd) Place winners in all Divisions, and at either NMSF, SNMSF, or ENMSF must select a new speech topic to remain eligible to enter the contest in subsequent year(s).
15. **Resources:** Participants are encouraged to use their Extension Agents, FFA Teachers, agricultural and natural resources professionals and New Mexico State University faculty as resources. All work and research must be the participant's own, but they are encouraged to network and learn from people working in the topic area related to their topic.

16. **Special Circumstances** - A majority vote of the New Mexico Agricultural Public Speaking Committee, or a decision by the Contest Superintendent, has authority to make exceptions to rules when appealed with compelling situations.

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



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