A Guide for Completing Idaho 4-H Record Books

Introduction

This publication is designed to assist volunteer leaders, parents and members in understanding how to successfully complete their Idaho 4-H Record Books annually. By simply following the instructions provided here, every member should be able to achieve success with minimal stress.

There are two different Idaho 4-H Record Books (animal & general), which are quite similar in design and format. Once you are familiar with completing either of these, you should not have problems adapting the same principles in completing the other version.

Why Keep Records?

One of the most commonly asked questions in 4-H is "Why do we have to fill out record books?"

Keeping accurate records is an integral part of everyone's adult life. Developing solid record keeping skills at an earlier age will benefit youth as they become adults, such as preparing income taxes, maintenance records, etc. Through 4-H, members are given an opportunity to learn this valuable life skill. Youth choosing to participate in 4-H programs need to know up front that a completed record book will be required.

Some other reasons for keeping good records are:

- Accurate, complete records encourage members to take pride in their project.
- Records provide an excellent way for youth to measure progress toward their goals.
- Records enable members to learn skills in organization, neatness, following directions and decision-making.
- They preserve factual information for future reference.

The attitude adult leaders have about record keeping will dramatically impact how youth view the process. A positive, enthusiastic attitude is a tremendous motivating factor when working with youth. Know why it is important to complete a record book, and explain this to the members. Show interest in each member's records and help parents understand the importance of encouraging their children to keep accurate records. Work on filling out record books throughout the project year (at home, meetings, etc.); don't wait until the last minute! When record keeping is put off until the last minute, our actions indicate to youth that this component of the 4-H project is not important.

When Does the Project Start?

The 4-H project usually begins with your first project meeting or when youth purchase their project animal(s), whichever occurs first. For members with animal projects being carried forward from the previous year, their project begins on the day immediately following the date they closed out last year's animal project record. If new members join after project meetings have started, their project would begin on the date they enrolled in 4-H. Check with your local Extension Office to see if they have different requirements than those outlined above.

Why this Record Keeping System Was Developed

These new materials (also available in an electronic format) were the result of feedback from 4-H faculty, leaders, members and parents for a more simplified/streamlined approach to record keeping. It also alleviated escalating costs associated with the printing, storage and mailing expense of maintaining over 70 different project records.

This system focuses on teaching the basic skills and incorporates opportunities for members to set goals and evaluate their own progress – key steps in a successful educational program.

Finally, with the consistent design format, once members & leaders learn to complete one type of record book, the same basic principles apply to completing the other one.

Let's Get Started

As we work through the Idaho 4-H Record Books, this publication will address the sections found within the 4-H Animal Project Record (#91940). While the two record books are very similar, a few sections exist within the Animal Record not found in the 4-H Project Record Book (#91950). When that occurs the wording {Animal Record Only} will appear next to the section heading in this publication.

The other differences are found on the cover of the 4-H Animal Project Record Book with asks for the type of project taken (market, breeding, other/pet) and level of detail within Expense page columns. Some counties allow members to place all their information for a given species (ex. market & breeding beef) in one record book while other counties request that each individual project is listed in a separate record book – be sure to check with your local Extension Office to insure you meet their specific requirements.

Finally, each and every section of the record book must be filled out for the record book to be considered complete. If for example, in the Animal Record Book, youth did not have any income – do not leave it blank; instead have members write "N/A" or "none" so that anyone reviewing the record book knows that they did not inadvertently leave information out.

Record Book Cover

When record books are distributed at the beginning of the project year, members should be encouraged to complete all the information requested on the cover (except for signatures) at that time. Signatures are placed on the cover after the project record and requirements have been completed. When members, parents and leaders sign the record book, they are verifying that the member has met all the requirements for project completion and that the information contained within it is accurate and complete.

Ethical Expectations
of 4-H Participants

While we are confident that all youth and adults within the 4-H Program will conduct themselves in a manner that positively reflects our high standards, it is valuable to review and remind everyone what those expectations are.

Think of fun ways for members and adults to do the review. One option is "rapid recall" where members are asked to name one of the traits and ways they could demonstrate that they were using that skill. Another is to develop a scenario and have the group determine if it were ethical or not using The Six Pillars of Character.

Let creativity be your guide, as individuals will retain this information better if they are involved in ways where they actively use it.

Project Goals

Developing the ability for youth to set goals and identify what resources they will need to reach those goals is an essential "life skill" that as adults, you have been entrusted to teach young people. Once learned, it is a skill that will serve them well throughout their lives – so avoid the temptation to rush through this section. Remember, everything we do should focus on the personal development of youth; the project results are of secondary importance.

Members should be encouraged to set their project goals at the beginning of the year (preferably at the first meeting). Youth often become involved because there is something they want to learn.

Encourage members to be specific in writing down their goals – avoid being too vague. This information can also enable project leaders to adapt their planning and related activities to assist youth in reaching their goals.

Space is provided to record up to five goals and the accompanying 3 or more "To Do's" for each goal. The reason behind encouraging members to be specific in their goals & "To Do's" is two-fold. First, it helps them to really focus in on what they want to do. Secondly, it will help them to objectively evaluate their level of success later on in the record book.

When working with members to set goals, try to insure they have at least one goal that is not dependent upon what others do or how a judge might place their exhibit. It is fine to work towards receiving a blue ribbon on their exhibit, as it is possible for them to succeed regardless of how other member's exhibits are evaluated. However, if their only goal is to win "Grand Champion" the overall success of their project rests with the judge's decision and depends on how they do in relation to every other member.

If winning is their goal, don't discourage them from writing that goal down. Instead, encourage them to identify at least one more goal to be noted within their record book.

Once members have their specific goal(s) written down, then they should record at least three things (actions) they can do for each goal that will help them achieve success. Junior age level youth must complete at least one goal and three "To Do's" for each of their respective projects; Intermediate members must complete at least 2 goals and accompanying "To Do's" while Senior division member must complete at least 3 goals and sets of "To Do's."
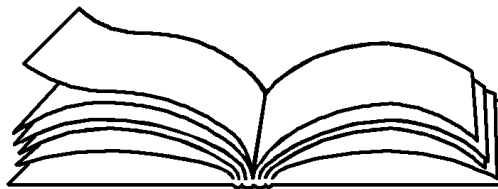
My Presentation

Besides learning to set goals and develop a plan to accomplish their goals, developing the self-confidence to get up and speak in front of a group of people is probably the other most-important life skill that 4-H can provide youth. Members should begin this section by recording the title of their presentation.

Next, they are asked to identify which type of oral presentation they gave. These are the primary differences for each one:

> Demonstrations – members physically show the various steps used in completing a specific process utilizing actual props/equipment.

> Illustrated Talk – members use posters/diagrams that aid in describing the topic or process they are speaking about.

> Public Speech – members speak about a topic or process without using any visual aids to assist in their presentation.

The next three entries are fairly straight-forward. Members should identify specific materials/props they used in this project-related presentation, then tell where (the location) and when (date) it was given; along with how many people were there to hear their presentation.

Finally, members should describe/outline what they talked about. For younger members two or three short sentences may be sufficient. However, as the members become older the level of expectation for what is written here (along with the actual length and content level of their presentations) increases. Senior members should have at least two paragraphs or detailed outline that describes in greater depth what they spoke about.

Project Information and Activity Log

A variety of quality activities greatly enhances the learning experience for youth involved in all 4-H program areas. They serve as useful tools in helping members achieve the personal goals and objectives they established.

Within the columns provided, members should be encouraged to record information about any activities/events they participated in related to their specific project. The minimum expectation is that members will record the date and what they learned at each of the project meetings they attended – but don't stop there.

Within each project there are normally other activities members have done (beyond the meetings) which should be recorded. It may be as simple as going to the local store for project supplies or even something that was learned while on a family vacation.

Some leaders have found it very useful to spend just a few minutes at the end of each project meeting so members record what they have learned or accomplished since the last project meeting – including what they just learned during the meeting. This approach helps avoid the tendency for members & leaders to put record keeping off until later.

A Point to Ponder:

As counties determine how they will utilize record books in the evaluation process, they need to discuss whether a clean, letter-perfect record with no smudge marks should be ranked higher than a detailed record which may have been filled out in different color pens/pencils, has a few smudge marks or even a stain or two. It is about trying to find a balance between appearance and content. Other concerns may exist regarding hand-written versus computer generated records.

Whatever the decision is, be sure this is communicated directly to members, leaders and judges.

Expense Record

While each of the two record books have an expense section, you will notice there are some slight differences in how these expenses are recorded.

In the 4-H Project Record Book, members are asked to simply list:

- the date project-related tools, equipment or supplies were purchased this year
- who they purchased the item from
- a brief description of that item, and
- the amount paid for the item

If their expenses exceed the space provided on the first page, they need to record sub-totals for each amount column on that page and transfer those figures to the "Balance Carried Forward" line on the following page. At the end of the project year, members total the "Amount" column(s) to determine this year's expenses.

While the 4-H Animal Record Book requires members to identify the date purchases were made and a brief description of the item bought (include market animal purchase weights), each expense is then placed in the column that best reflects what was purchased:

> Feed – includes grain, hay, pasture, salt, minerals and/or other dietary supplements.
>
> Animals – the cost for any project animal(s) purchased* this year.
>
> Equipment – includes items such as feeders, buckets, syringes, brushes, combs, show equipment, etc.
>
> Misc. – list any other project costs (medications, hoof care, brand inspections, entry fees, etc.)

* For members taking "home-raised" market animals, include an animal section entry in the Expense Record listing the current market value of the animal(s) when their project starts [multiply the prevailing market price and actual/estimated weight of the project animal(s)].

If members utilize "home-raised" feeds for their project, they should calculate and record the market value of these in the Feed column. Listing these values are essential in accurately reflecting the profit/loss statement at the end of the market project year.

Each individual expense item should be listed on a separate line of the Expense Record.

Income Record

While most adults and members associate 4-H project-related income with market animal projects, there are several other sources of income that are less obvious and should be recorded. These include sales of project-related equipment, money earned by providing a service (small engines – lawn mowing; horse – training colts, etc.), prize money or premiums awarded at various shows/exhibitions, etc.

The categories for the Income Record correspond with the Expense Record within a given record book. If you encounter questions on where a particular item should be listed, refer back to the previous section of this publication. At the end of the project, members should total the column(s).

If the member has not received any income at the time the record book is to be completed, members should mark "N/A" (not applicable) on the first line in the date column. This notifies a judge that the member has not inadvertently forgotten to complete this section.

Profit or Loss {Animal Record Only}

This section enables members to actually see what it cost them to complete their project. Members record their total income from the Income Record, subtract their total expense from the Expense Record. The resulting figure represents their profit (or loss). *Note: losses should be placed in parentheses ( ).*

Market Animal Health Record
{Animal Record Only}

As the heading implies, this section should only be completed for any health-related care given to <u>market</u> animals the member is carrying as a part of their project. (*Members with non-market animal projects need to record this information in the Animal Health section of the appropriate Permanent Individual Animal Record – see publication #72101.*)

The description under the heading provides good examples of what types of practices or treatments should be listed in this section. Members begin by listing the actual date the treatment was given and that particular animal's identification number (ear tag, ear notch, etc.). Then they should write a brief description of the condition or problem that was observed and finally list what treatment the animal was given (including product name, dosage & how given). If there are specific withdrawal times for any product given, that information is to be listed in the "Treatment Given" section as well, to help insure proper food safety procedures are followed.

Market Animal Production Summary
{Animal Record Only}

Two major factors that impact the overall profitability of any market animal feeding operation is Average Daily Gain and Feed Cost per Pound of Gain. This section helps youth to identify how efficient their market animal management practices were. It may require members to gather information from various sources/records to accurately complete this section.

When determining their Average Daily Gain, members need to identify the total pounds their project animal(s) gained while on test. When the county conducts a preliminary and final weigh-in for market animals, this represents the "Test Period." Thus, by subtracting the preliminary weight from the final weight, members can determine how many pounds were gained while on Test. If members have two or more project animals, they should calculate the gain for each animal and record the total pounds gained for all project animals in the space provided.

In the space provided for the "Number Animals Fed", youth record how many animals they used to determine the Total Lbs. Gained on Test above.

To figure the "Number Days on Test", count the number of days (starting with the day after the preliminary weigh-in as the 1st day) to the final weigh-in. After recording these values on the spaces provided, use the mathematical equation shown to arrive at the correct answer.

If your county does not conduct a formal feeding trial/test period and has not provided youth with specific instructions for completing this section, members may opt to calculate the average daily gain for their project animal(s) from the date of purchase to the final weigh-in, using the concepts noted above.

For counties using this option, it is important to remind members to obtain and record the weight for each animal purchased in the Description column of their Expense Record, otherwise this information is sometimes forgotten by the time they need to complete Average Daily Gain portion of this section.

The second equation helps members to better understand how much it cost them to produce a pound of gain for their project animal(s). In determining the total feed cost, they can refer back to their Expense Record and retrieve how much they paid to feed this year. This figure should be recorded in the space provided for Total Feed Cost. The only adjustment that may need to be made to this figure is when members still have extra hay or grain leftover. If that occurs, an adjusted value should be recorded here based on the total feed expenses (from the Expense Record) minus the value of these leftover feeds.

When calculating the total cost per pound of gain, member's need to be able to determine how many pounds their project animal(s) have gained from the date of purchase to the time they are sold (or the project ends). Again, it is highly recommended that members record the purchase weight of their animals within the Description column of their Expense Record. Once determined, record the total gain where requested and complete the calculations shown.

Important Note: The "Total Lbs. Gained on Test" and the "Total Lbs. Gained" for these two separate equations will likely be 2 different values.

How Did You Do?

Only the individual 4-H member can accurately assess if their experiences within the program helped them reach their personal goals. This section allows members to look back on the goals they set at the beginning of the year (record book, page 3) and evaluate how well they did in reaching those goals.

The role of adults in this process should be that of a coach. Ask questions that help youth recognize their achievements, and in those areas where they feel they "fell short" encourage them to explore different approaches they might try next year to reach that goal.

When reviewing a member's self-evaluation, recognize that youth may tend to be overly critical of themselves when they don't achieve their goal on the first try. Help them understand that every effort is not always successful, but what's important is to learn from the experience and to try to figure out what changes they can make which could increase their chances for success in the future.

The level of detail within the explanation should be appropriate for the member's age. Simple phrases or a sentence may be sufficient for a Junior age member, while Intermediate and Senior explanations should provide more thought and insight.

The additional benefit that members receive by carefully evaluating their accomplishments and goals is that frequently they can take and build on the past year's results when setting goals to the new year; especially in those areas where their initial goal was not fully reached.

Remember

Learning is a series of activities or events where knowledge is gained by trial and error – failure only occurs when we refuse to learn from the errors we make.

Photographs

While members are not required to include any pictures in their record, having 2 or 3 photographs from throughout their current project year with descriptive captions can enhance their total experience – especially when looking back on their 4-H involvement several years later. The choice is up to them; encourage, but don't force the issue.

4-H Story

While blank pages are not included in the 4-H Record Book, a member's Story provides a tremendous opportunity to relate the various experiences they encountered and learned from this past year. Two options exist for writing a 4-H Story – the Project Focused Experience (which targets what occurred related to that specific project area) or the Total Experience (covering all 4-H experiences that year within just one story). Check with your local Extension Office to see which format is used within your respective county.

Regardless of the format, as with other sections of the Record Book, the level of detail and thought provided should be appropriate for the member's age and ability. Suggested tips on what to include within a quality 4-H Story is provided on the last page of the Record Book, along with guidelines on length and design. (Note: members are encouraged to address at least three of the suggested points listed.)

Closing Thoughts

This *Guide for Completing Idaho 4-H Record Books* was developed to address many of the questions raised by leaders when helping members to successfully complete their 4-H record book. While it can't cover all the different situations you may encounter, it can provide a starting point to deal with these situations when they arise. Some counties may have slightly different policies and guidelines regarding completion and packaging of 4-H project record books. Be sure to check with your local University of Idaho Extension office at the beginning of each project year to insure you are aware of any changes that may have been made, or if you need further assistance.

Finally, incorporate record keeping as part of every meeting (and at home) – don't put it off until the last minute. Whether it is recording what was just learned or was done since the last meeting, it can significantly reduce everyone's stress level as the project nears completion.

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