AJCA YOUTH CATTLE WORKING CONTEST
2026 OFFICIAL RULES

ELIGIBILITY

Each team will consist of three members. **Team members must be an AJCA member, have a current BQA number, and be a current high school freshman to high school senior.** Teams may represent county 4-H programs, county FFA chapters, county cattlemen's groups, or be comprised of individuals from *adjacent* counties. Age, AJCA membership, and BQA certification status will be verified on all contestants prior to the competition. Teams must enter on an official entry form and provide a completed Code of Conduct form for each team member. Code of Conduct will include each team member's parent/guardian's signature indicating their permission for their child to participate.

All contestants must have chute-side experience and have practiced on live cattle prior to competing in the contest. All contest officials have the discretion to intervene in any situation when deemed necessary. Teams that are operating in an unsafe manner (either to humans or cattle) will be immediately disqualified.

Team members and coaches must ALL be Beef Quality Assurance (BQA) Certified to compete. BQA certification must be completed/verified and submitted **no later than April 17, 2026**. BQA Certification can be completed in any of the following ways:

1. Instructor-led training by a BQA Certified Instructor
2. Online at the National BQA Website: bqa.beeflearningcenter.org

Contestants that do not have a current BQA certification by April 17, 2026, are ineligible to compete, therefore making their team ineligible.

*BQA Certification is valid for three years. If you have questions about the BQA Certification status of youth contestants, please contact State BQA Coordinators Ali Gotcher (acg0134@aces.edu) or Dr. Soren Rodning (rodnisp@auburn.edu).

TEAM ENTRY

Teams will be comprised of three members and one optional alternate. Team member names must be identified during the team registration process. At the time of contest check-in, the three active team members must be designated.

As this is the inaugural Youth Cattle Working Competition in Alabama, there will be a maximum number of **15 teams** that can compete in this year's state competition. **Each county may enter only <u>one</u> team** in the state competition. Team entries will be accepted on a first-come, first-serve basis. Counties wishing to enter more than one team may place additional teams on a waitlist. If fewer than 15 teams are registered by the entry deadline, counties will be invited to bring additional teams from the waitlist. *Please note that we hope this limitation will change in years to come if the competition is successful.*

<u>Entry deadline is Monday, April 13, 2026, at 11:59 PM CST – no exceptions</u>.

Team Eligibility in Future Contests: The individuals who competed on the winning team of the state contest are no longer eligible to compete in future AJCA Youth Cattle Working Contests. Non-competing alternates from those teams are still eligible for future contests.

CONTEST PROTOCOL

Each team will be required to work three head of cattle through a holding pen into a chute and properly catch each animal's neck in a head gate. All products and equipment will be provided to each team at the contest.

At the contest, teams will be sequestered in a holding location during and after completing their Cattle Processing Plan and team problem. No phones are allowed until after the team has competed. Teams will remain in the designated area until it is their turn to work their cattle. Coaches will not be allowed contact with contestants while in the holding location and/or prior to entering the chute/working area. After completing their working session, teams may watch subsequent teams compete.

Before cattle processing begins, each team will be given the products to be used along with a Cattle Processing Plan and form. Team members will be required to complete the Cattle Processing Plan form in <u>30 minutes</u>. Information included on the Cattle Processing Plan includes procedures to be completed, products to be used, route of administration, location on animal for application, dosage, and pre-slaughter withdrawal time. ***All maps will be scored (and corrected, if needed) and returned to each team as their turn arrives to compete at the chute.***

Please familiarize yourself with the Cattle Processing Plan. This is the Cattle Processing Plan that will be used for the state contest. Please remember that all products and procedures (even those that do not involve a product [e.g. ear tags]) should be listed on the Cattle Processing Plan.

Each team will be responsible for the preparation and administration of animal health products and procedures as needed. These may include, but are not limited to:

- Vaccines
    - Killed
    - Modified Live
    - Combo
- Ear tagging (removal and/or administration)
    - Visual
    - Insecticide
- Deworming
    - Pour-on
    - Injectable
    - Drench
- Implanting
- Weighing
- Record keeping

Teams will be evaluated on the way in which they handle the cattle and use the handling equipment. Unnecessary rough or harsh handling of the cattle will result in point deductions. Only equipment provided by the contest administrators will be allowed. The use of any other driving sticks, canes, or other devices is prohibited.

The safety of the competitors and the cattle will be emphasized. The cattle should be handled as safely as possible to minimize any potential for injury to team members. **If the judges feel that a potentially dangerous situation exists, processing and time will be stopped.** Any action that could put the handlers or cattle at risk may result in a deduction for safety.

The actual cattle working will be timed. Timing will begin after the Cattle Processing Plan is approved by the judges, and contestants have been given the ok to begin. Time ends when the last animal's fourth leg/foot exits the headgate.

GUIDELINES FOR SCORING YOUTH CATTLE WORKING CONTEST

There are three components of the Youth Cattle Working Contest that will be scored: the Cattle Processing Plan, the actual working of the cattle, and the Team Problem.

Cattle Processing Plan:

The Cattle Processing Plan provides information about the products that are used, how they are used, and where they are administered, and the procedures completed. This document becomes a permanent health record for this group of cattle. If the cattle were sold, this

document would accompany the cattle, so the new owner is aware of the details surrounding health products administered to the cattle.

In the Cattle Processing Plan, the following information is requested and guidelines for answering these questions are provided:

A. **Product/Procedure**: Complete name of product as it appears on the label.
B. **Contents:** Provide the disease/virus the product protects against and/or the contents it contains. Make sure to give the specified scientific name, abbreviations will not be accepted. This should be listed as it appears on the label. If documenting a procedure, use this column to list the type of sample being collected or "N/A", if more appropriate.
C. **Type:** MLV, Combo, killed – the product type should be listed as one of the three choices or N/A if it is a procedure or a product that does not fit one of those three categories.
D. **Route:** The Cattle Processing Plan provides the following possible responses – Intramuscular (IM), Subcutaneous (SQ), Topical (T), Intranasal (IN), Ear Tag (ET), Oral (O), and Epidermis (E). Proper administration is found on the label. Do not include where the product is administered here, that information is covered in another area of the cattle processing plan. When the choice of SQ or IM is given on a product label, the proper response is always SQ.
E. **Dose** – Dosing information is found on the product label. Dose provided needs to be practical based upon the instrument used to measure the dose. In other words, if a dewormer is calculated to be given at the rate of 26.4 ml, and the dosing instrument is scaled in multiples of 5ml, then the dose given should be listed as 30 ml. You can't accurately measure the 26.4 ml dose with the instrument used, and underdosing of dewormer is a bad technique, so you would round up.
    a. **Tags** – Insecticide ear tags are often applied based on the level of protection desired. Contest officials should note whether "Adequate" or "Optimum" control is desired, and the contestants should consider that prior to calculating the proper dosage for the Cattle Processing Plan. Thus, the proper way to indicate this dose is for example, "2-(1 in each ear)".
F. **Serial Number**– Serial number or lot number (if a serial number is not present) for all the items associated with any single product should be listed. Some products may have multiple components with different serial or lot numbers, and each one is to be listed.
G. **Expiration** – the expiration date for all products should be listed. If a procedure or product does not contain an expiration date, please list "N/A".
H. **Withdrawal** – Should be recorded in days. This information is found on the product label. If there is no withdrawal required, then record a '0' in the space for that product. For ear tags, it may be stated that they are to be removed before slaughter, and — if so — that information should be put on the Processing Plan.
I. **Location of Administration** – Location is to be noted on the animal illustrations which appear at the top of the Cattle Processing Plan by writing the number of the product on the designated space. Injectable products can be given <u>only</u> in the neck. Note that there is a right side and a left side depiction provided. Do not give 2 different injectable products in the same location.

a. For pour-on dewormers, draw a line with a beginning and ending point to indicate the entire region of the top line where the product is to be poured.

The weight of the cattle being used <u>may</u> be given to the participants by contest administration prior to the Cattle Processing Plan being completed. If the weights are not given, contestants will be expected to weigh animals and calculate the correct dose for the Cattle Processing Plan.

The correct procedure for administering each product will be corrected on the cattle processing plan, if necessary. Failure to apply a product or improper administration will result in point deductions. Products should be applied in accordance with the team's approved cattle processing plan.

THE JUDGES SCORE SHEET

The Judges Score Sheet provides specific information about each product. The judge's job is to evaluate the proper use of the instrument, proper handling of the product, safe and effective delivery of the product to the cattle, and to determine if the product is given in the way described on the Cattle Processing Plan. The judge is to closely observe these factors for each calf worked by the team. If all three head of cattle are not worked, then no score will be given, and the team will be disqualified.

Point deductions are at the discretion of the judge. Additional points may be deducted if deemed necessary by the judge

Scoring Outline:

I. Cattle Processing Plan – 20 points
II. Procedures Performed – 50-80 points (Varies on how many procedures are performed)
    a. Vaccination Injections
    b. Dewormer
    c. Implants
    d. Tags
III. Cattle Handling – 10 points
IV. Safety – 10 points
V. Time – 10 points
VI. Team Problem – 25 points

*Ties will be broken based on the following sections in order: Cattle Processing Plan, Cattle Working Time.

Specific guidelines for evaluation and scoring for each type of product are as follows:

A. **Vaccination Injections.** These should all be given according to the label directions and the cattle processing plan. Watch carefully to be sure that subcutaneous (SQ) shots are

being administered under the skin and inside of the triangle. Either the one-handed technique (needed goes in at a very steep angle) or two-handed tenting technique are acceptable. Intramuscular (IM) injections should be given in the triangle in front of the scapula, above the neck vertebrae (tendency is to give the injection too far down where the neck bones are), and at least 2 inches down from the top of the neck to stay out of the ligamentum nuchae. All IM injections should be given deep enough to be sure they are in the muscle (depth of a 1" needle). Aspiration to be sure that the needle is not in a vessel is encouraged. Intranasal (IN) products require administration in the nostril. The IN cannula must be used and replaced for each animal. Mixing/diluting the vaccine is often required and must be done properly. Syringes are not required to be changed for every animal but should be changed if the inside of the barrel or tubing becomes contaminated with dirt, blood, or bodily fluids. A new, sterile needle should be used every time a vaccine is drawn up and administered. If a needle is dropped or bent or buried, it should be replaced.

Possible 3 Point deductions to include:

- Handling needles in an unsafe manner

Possible 2 Point deductions to include:

- Failure to re-administer product if not given correctly on the first attempt
- Shot was given IM instead of SQ
- Failure to use a new disposable needle
- Vaccine was not properly mixed/diluted
- Needle was not switched between each animal
- Failure to change cannulas between calves, if given intranasally
- Failure to administer into the nostril, if given intranasally
- Failure to change needle if it was dropped, burred, or bent
- Injection given behind the neck, too high, too low, or too far forward
- Injections were not given at least four inches apart

Possible 1 Point deductions to include:

- Took more than 1 attempt to administer properly
- Injection not given where indicated on the Cattle Processing Plan
- IM injection was given too shallow in the muscle
- IM injection was not aspirated before given
- Wrong dose given (too much or too little)
- Needle was dropped, burred, or bent

B. **Implants.** All implant products are to be given on the back of the ear, under the skin, with the implant deposited out on the ear and not in the softer tissue at the base of the ear. After correct administration, it should be easily palpated by gently squeezing the site between thumb and finger. If the implant product consists of multiple individual pellets, these should be deposited in a line as they appear in the product cartridge

rather than in a cluster. Implants may be applied to either ear. They must be administered before any insecticide tag is applied, if applicable. However, the "rib" of the ear where the ear tag is applied and where the implant is applied should differ. Points will be deducted if the ear tag button and the implant are in contact with each other. The needle of the implant gun should be disinfected after each calf, using a disinfectant dispenser sponge wipe, or other technique. However, immersing the needle in the disinfectant is not to be done, as this may lead to dissolving implant pellets.

Possible 2 point deductions to include:

- Implant deposited in a cluster
- Needle runs through the ear and implant falling to the ground
- Implant not palpable on the back of the ear in a SQ location.

Possible 1 point deduction to include:

- Implant is in contact with button or ear tag
- Failure to disinfect implant gun between calves

C. **Dewormer.** There are several different ways in which dewormers are designed to be administered, based upon the product. These include oral liquids administered with a drench gun, oral pastes administered with a specific gun-type device, topical liquids designed to be poured on the back, and injectable forms. In the case of all but the injectables, the measurement of a specific dose is somewhat imprecise due to both the volume of product included in a single dose, and also the accuracy of measurement with the application device. Consequently, the dose applied should be rounded up to the next higher amount that can be measured with the device, rather than some "in-between" quantity.

   a. Orally administered products (liquid or paste) must be given in such a fashion that the calf does not spit it out. Proper technique involves getting the applicator over the top of the tongue before depressing the trigger. The best way to do this is by entering the side of the mouth with the instrument and gently forcing it between the molars over the tongue. Putting your hands in the mouth is both awkward and dangerous. With boluses, the hand is inserted in the side of the mouth opposite where the worker stands and pressure on the roof of the mouth results in the calf opening his mouth so that the balling gun can be inserted over the root of the tongue. Proper use of the applicator involves setting it to the proper dose based on weight of the cattle and also on the dose described on the label. The applicator needs to be positioned in such a way that product flows into the gun when it is supposed to "reload". Failure to do this means an incomplete dose is brought into the applicator.
   b. Topically applied products (also known as pour-on) are normally applied in a line down the back of the animal from withers to tail head. Care should be taken to avoid any foreign material that might interfere with the absorption of the topically applied product. Pouring these products in a pool in a single spot is a bad technique, resulting in improper absorption of the product. These products

often have a safe handling warning on the label, the result being that they should not be handled with bare hands. To avoid splashing a product on a teammate, the injections should be completed before the topical dewormer is applied. Applicators can be gun-type devices with adjustable dosing capability that pump product out of a large container or reservoir. There is also a direct applicator bottle whereby a single dose is squeezed from one location of the bottle into another region of the bottle, and this in turn is poured directly onto the calf. The cap of the bottle must be loosened to allow the product to flow from one portion of the bottle into the other.

Possible 2 point deductions to include:

- Failure to re-administer oral product if calf spits it out
- Improper measure of dosage for proper applicator
- Handling products labeled as hazardous without gloves

Possible 1 Point deductions to include:

- Took more than one attempt to administer properly
- Failure to apply the topical product from withers to tail head
- Failure to insert applicator of an orally administered product sufficiently into mouth
- Failure to wait to complete injections before applying topical product
- Failure to adjust technique if corrected by official
- Applying product on top of foreign material

Judges should point out errors that pose a safety risk (e.g., not wearing gloves) or that result in improper dose being applied (gun not set properly). If a team fails to adjust their technique, then an additional point will be deducted, and the team will not be allowed to proceed until the error is corrected.

D. **Tags.** The type of tags – insecticide or identification – will be left up to the discretion of the site coordinator and the owner of the cattle. Tags should be placed according to label directions in terms of number: 1 or 2 per animal or location instructions per the producer. All insecticide tags call for handling with gloves. Tag placements in the center of the ear, between the two cartilage ribs in the ear. Putting them through the cartilage rib predisposes to infection. Placement too close to the end of the ear increases tear out.

Possible 2 Point deductions to include:

- Insecticide tags were handled without gloves
- Tag not placed securely or correctly in ear

Possible 1 Point deductions to include:

- Took more than one attempt to administer properly
- Ear tag not placed in 2 ears per instructions on bag
- Ear tag button is in contact with implant
- Tag placed in ear backward (unless placed here to avoid blocking visual tag)
- Tag not placed in location specified on Cattle Processing Plan

E. **Cattle Handling.** Scoring for this is somewhat subjective. Nice, smooth, quiet handling is being sought after. Points may be deducted for noisy or rough handling and errors in catching heads, moving cattle, etc.

Possible 3 point deductions to include:

- Completely missing an animal

Possible 2 Point deductions (minimum) to include:

- Rough handling
- Excessive roughness in moving cattle
- Failure to use crowd gate
- Excessive use of cattle stick/electric cattle prod

Possible 1 Point deductions to include:

- Team had to have more than one attempt to properly load cattle into alley chute
- Noisy handling
- Team had to have more than one attempt to properly catch the animal
- Failure to use squeeze before starting processing
- Failure to release squeeze before releasing calf
- Failure to latch crowd gate
- Failure to use butt bar behind calves
- Failure to remove butt bar in chute after releasing calf when gate is open for next calf

F. **Safety.** It may be necessary to reach into a chute to move cattle. If this is done correctly, it should not result in deductions for safety. The reach must come from high enough in the chute to be above where calves would usually pass to avoid arm injury. Cattle may be encouraged to move forward in the chute by walking past them from front to back, by gentle pokes with a sorting stick, with a plastic paddle, with a sorting flag, by twisting a tail, or by an electric cattle prod <u>as a last resort</u> *if* an electric prod is provided by the contest administrator. All working sticks and electric prods (if needed) will be provided by the contest administrator. Points should be deducted for excessive poking with a stick or outright hitting cattle. Deductions should not be made for cattle turning around

in the chute or alley if this is beyond the control of the handlers. How the handlers deal with such an event is a subjective way to assess the team's handling ability.

a. Contest Administrators may stop time on any team to assist with safely getting the calf turned around. Time should begin again once the calf is turned around or returned to the tub to be reloaded.
b. No deduction should be made for putting an arm through the chute if it is done appropriately and high enough in the chute so a calf cannot injure the arm.

Possible 2-point deductions (minimum) to include:

- Any action that puts handlers/team at risk
- Handler's head too close to the calf's head during tagging or implanting
- Attempting to inject in the neck in front of the head catch

Possible 1-point deductions to include:

- Dropping the tail gate on the calf

G. **Time. A 20-minute maximum will be enforced at the State Contest.** Teams will be given 5 minutes to evaluate the working area prior to starting the actual cattle working. A team is automatically disqualified if they exceed the 20-minute maximum time allowed. **All contest officials have the discretion to intervene in situations when deemed necessary**. Any time over 10 minutes will receive a 1-point deduction each 30 seconds over time. It is the responsibility of the teams to know the maximum time limit before the contest starts. Time may be stopped at the discretion of the contest official(s), if necessary, to address an animal in distress or other animal/human safety issues. Once resolved, time will resume. If all 3 head of cattle are not worked then no score will be given, and the team will be disqualified. Points will be given for time as follows:

- Under 10 minutes – 10 points
- 10:01-10:30 – 9 points
- 10:31-11:00 – 8 points
- 11:01-11:30 – 7 points
- 11:31-12:00 – 6 points
- 12:01-12:30 – 5 points
- 12:31 – 13:00 – 4 points
- 13:01 – 13:30 – 3 points
- 13:31-14:00 – 2 points
- 14:01 – 14:30 – 1 point
- 14:31 – 15:00 – ½ point
- Over 15 minutes – 0 points

H. **Team Problem.** In addition to the Cattle Processing Plan and cattle handling activities, each team will be required to complete a team problem addressing quality assurance with regards to product selection, administration, and withdrawal times or cost benefits of an animal health program. Example problems will be made available. The team problem will be worth 25 points and teams will have 20 minutes to complete the team problem.