



# Virginia Cooperative Extension

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## 4-H and FFA



# Competition Guide

## Agriscience Research Poster Contest at the State Fair of Virginia

Agriscience research is an exciting opportunity for students interested in scientific principles and emerging technologies in the agricultural industry. This annual event allows eligible 4-H and FFA students to explore aspects of science in agriculture, helping them to develop skills in critical thinking and inquiry that will benefit them as they enter the workforce. Awards and prize money will be granted to those student’s whose posters best reflect the guidelines and intent of the contest.

Superintendent: Dr. Hannah Scherer, Virginia Tech, [hscherer@vt.edu](mailto:hscherer@vt.edu)

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## Contest Rules

1. Teams (1 or 2 individuals) must register by sending electronic registrations to *TBD*. Registration forms and annual deadlines can be found on the Virginia FFA website.  
<http://www.vaffa.org/student/statefair.html>
2. This contest is open to 4-H and FFA members in the state of Virginia. 4-H or FFA members who have won previous national agriscience contests and college students are not eligible to compete.
3. There will be a junior and senior division: FFA Junior division will be students in grades 6-9 and FFA Senior division will be students in grades 10-12. 4-H Junior division will be ages 9-13 years old and 4-H Senior division will be ages 14-19 years old.
4. Agriscience projects must represent *original* basic or applied scientific research in one of the following categories:
  - Animal Systems
  - Environmental Services/Natural Resource Systems
  - Food Products and Processing Systems
  - Plant Systems
  - Power, Structural and Technical Systems
  - Social Systems
5. Results of projects will be displayed using a standard poster format with the following requirements:
  - a. The maximum allowed size is 36 inches (height) by 48 inches (width).
  - b. Posters will be hung and should not be designed to be free standing.
  - c. There will be no additional space to display objects with the poster; these items are not permitted.
  - d. Posters must include the name of the person(s) responsible for the work, chapter name, division (junior or senior), category (see #4 above), and the title of the work.

## Content Guidelines for Research Posters

Each exhibit should include information relevant to the study, such that judges get a clear picture of the research project that was conducted. In particular, it should address the following questions:

- What work was conducted?
- Why was it done?
- How was the work conducted?
- What were the findings of this project?
- What new understanding was gained through this project?

Students are free to determine the best way to organize and present their information. It is important to keep in mind that some things are better explained visually (pictures, diagrams, graphs, charts, etc.) than with text, especially on a poster. If desired, students may use the standard sections for a scientific research project: abstract, introduction, methods, results, discussion/conclusions. The National FFA Agriscience Fair Handbook ( linked here: <https://www.ffa.org/programs/awards/agrisciencefair/pages/default.aspx>) has descriptions of each of these sections, as do numerous science fair resources.

## Poster Judging and Results

Each poster will be judged individually using the rubric on the following page. Average total score will determine team placement in each division (junior and senior). There is not an interview portion of the contest; students are *not* required to be present for judging. Results will be posted and sent to team advisors along with copies of the judging rubrics with comments from the judges.

## Judging Rubric: VA 4-H and FFA Agriscience Research Poster Contest

Student Name (s) \_\_\_\_\_

Division \_\_\_\_\_

Chapter/ Club Name \_\_\_\_\_

Category \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_/5 **Title:** Is the title concise and appropriate for the research completed?

\_\_\_\_\_/15 **Introduction/Purpose:** Is it clear what the research problem is and why the student has chosen to pursue it?

\_\_\_\_\_/15 **Experimental Design/Methods:** Has the problem been clearly stated and solved using appropriate methodology? Are data collection and statistical methods well defended and relevant to the question?

\_\_\_\_\_/15 **Results:** Are the results easy to understand? Are the graphs and figures (if any) a clear depiction of the results?

\_\_\_\_\_/15 **Discussion/Conclusions:** Do the conclusions follow logically from the results? Has the student explained the relevance of and future directions for this research?

\_\_\_\_\_/15 **Scientific Principles:** Are the conclusions drawn accurate? Does the student have an understanding of the scientific principles used?

\_\_\_\_\_/15 **Visual Display:** Is the poster visually appealing? Do the sections of the poster flow well or do they seem disjointed? Do the more important parts of the poster catch your attention, or do you need to search for things such as the research question and results?

\_\_\_\_\_/ 5 **Grammar/Syntax:** Was the student mindful of spelling and sentence structure? If there are grammatical issues, do they affect the clarity of the sentence?

Total \_\_\_\_/100



### Awards and Scholarships

The State Fair of Virginia will award ribbons to the eight high posters in the Junior and Senior divisions. The top three teams will receive rosette ribbons and the next 5 teams will receive flat ribbons. Cash prizes will be presented to the top five teams in each division in the following amounts:

Placing	Award	Placing	Award
1 <sup>st</sup>	\$50	4 <sup>th</sup>	\$20
2 <sup>nd</sup>	\$40	5 <sup>th</sup>	\$10
3 <sup>rd</sup>	\$30		

Contestants will also be eligible to participate in the State Fair Scholarship Program. Please see the State Fair website [www.statefairva.org](http://www.statefairva.org) for more information regarding the State Fair of Virginia Scholarship Program and eligibility requirements for other available scholarships. The following scholarships will be awarded to the top three teams in the Junior and Senior contests:

Level	1 <sup>st</sup>	2 <sup>nd</sup>	3 <sup>rd</sup>
Junior	\$150.00	\$100.00	\$100.00
Senior	\$300.00	\$200.00	\$100.00

## Agriscience Resources for Students

- Virginia FFA State Agriscience Program

<http://www.vaffa.org/-!agriscience-fair/cwol>

- “Planet Ag” Agricultural Topics for Science Fair Projects

<http://www.freshfromflorida.com/Divisions-Offices/Marketing-and-Development/Education/For-Parents-and-Students/Planet-Ag-Agricultural-Topics-for-Science-Fair-Projects>

- Search for project ideas based on topic and difficulty level

<http://www.all-science-fair-projects.com/>

<http://www.agclassroom.org/teen/science/idealab.htm>

- National FFA Agriscience Videos

<http://www.schooltube.com/video/6eacfb2c0b9e370534d/>

If you have any questions about Agriscience or the Agriscience  
Research Poster Contest, please contact Hannah Scherer at

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