

Itasca FFA Interest Sheet

What does it have to offer?

The FFA is a dynamic student organization and it is the biggest of its kind. It's mission is to make a positive difference in the lives of students by developing their potential for premier leadership, personal growth and career success through agricultural education. There is a place for everyone in the FFA. It is not just showing animals.

Livestock exhibiting is what the FFA is mainly known for. FFA students show a vast array of livestock from Market and Breeding rabbits to broilers, goats, lambs, pigs, heifers and steers. Students decide what animal they would like to exhibit, together, with their parents, they determine the animal that is right for their budget and manage the daily care and feeding of the animal on a day to day basis, depending on when the animal's final show is. Students are encouraged to keep their animals at the school project facility, with a signed contract. Students enrolled in an Ag Mechanics class are also able to build and compete against fellow mechanics at several stock shows throughout the year.

While we do offer an outlet for the students to show several different species of livestock, we also offer the students to compete in [Leadership Development Competitions](#) and [Career Development Competitions](#). Your student may have no interest in showing an animal at all but in no way does that mean that they shouldn't or couldn't be an integral part of the FFA. All FFA members are also encouraged to participate in leadership development events in the Fall and career development events in the spring. These are additional team opportunities students have to compete in. This organization produces leaders and offers plenty of networking outlets as well as issues more scholarships to a more diverse group of students than any other organization in the country. As a parent, I encourage you to check out "[My Texas FFA](#)" and encourage your student to join.

What qualifies a student for FFA?

Students that are currently enrolled in or have been enrolled in an Ag class in the past year can pay dues and become an active member. Student dues for the entire year and make the student eligible for any FFA competition or program the organization offers.

Jr. FFA

What does it have to offer?

Our Jr. FFA program is focused on introducing the concept of caring for and exhibiting a stock show project of some kind. Whether it be something small like breeding rabbits or a meat pen or goats, lambs, pigs, steers or heifers, we allow our youngest students the same opportunities as our older students. Students are responsible for the well-being of the animal from the day they bring it home until the "end of the road". Jr. FFA students may keep their animals at the school project facility as well. We also allow our young mechanics to begin their carpentry skills by helping them create wood projects for

competition in our county show. Any student, currently enrolled in the Itasca ISD that is 8 and in the 3rd grade may become part of the Jr. FFA.

Animal Projects

Rabbits

Breeding

Breeding Rabbits are a great “starter” project for any family. Breeding rabbits can either be bought in “pairs” or singles. The whole idea of the breeding rabbit project is for the student to learn the necessary skills it takes to be responsible for a livestock project. Many of our first year Jr. FFA students do breeding rabbits if their parents are unsure of the amount of time and energy they can give to an animal. It is not necessary for breeding rabbits to breed.

Breeding rabbits cost depending on breed. Some are as cheap as \$35 and can be as high as \$200. It all just depends on what you want and what you want to spend.

Breeding rabbits should be housed in a hutch, up off the ground and relatively close to the house so the threat of predators is small. Rabbits are more susceptible to heat and cold stress and should be taken care of accordingly (fan in summer and blankets over cage in winter). Indoor rabbits are best.

Breeding rabbits eat a pelleted rabbit food (whichever brand you prefer) and should be watered daily. Breeding rabbits can become pets to the student as it is ok for them to be picked up and handled. Breeding rabbits should be groomed and nails trimmed on a regular basis.

Meat Pen

Meat pens are another great “starter” project for any family. Meat pens are a short-term project with the duration only being that of 6-10 weeks. Meat pens are intended to be sold at the county show but, sometimes it is necessary to find them new homes if you are no longer interested in keeping them and they don't make sale. A meat pen is 4 rabbits and you end up only showing 3. All are from the same litter so as to make a uniform “pen” of rabbits. Meat pen breeds are Black and White New Zealand and Californians.

Meat Pens usually cost about \$200 or more.

Meat pen rabbits eat a pelleted rabbit food (whichever brand you prefer) and should be watered daily. Meat pens should not be handled on a daily basis but should be weighed weekly to determine appropriate gain. Meat pen rabbits are not to be used as pets during the project period but may make great pets at the completion of the project period. Meat pen rabbits should remain dry to keep their coat healthy and nails should be trimmed often.

Goats

Goats are a great starter project for the student that is beginning to become interested in raising animals but is a little more mature than simply wanting to handle rabbits. They are NOT for someone who intends to invest little time on their project.

Cost: \$400-\$\$\$\$

Feed: ~\$20/ bag + additives throughout season

Housing: Needs to be housed in a pen, close to house or with other like animals so that they are away from predators. Need cover from the weather. Goats may be housed in the Ag Barn with a signed contract.

Work: Need to be fed twice per day and worked with every day. Goats need to be taught to walk on a collar/chain, need to be able to be set up and touched by anyone. Goats require vigorous exercise if you want to compete in the show ring.

Lambs

Lambs are a great starter project for the older student or students who are a bit taller. Lambs have more strength, height and weight than a goat and sometimes small, unstable kids can be at risk of the lamb knocking them over.

Cost: \$500-\$\$\$\$

Feed: ~\$20/ bag + additives throughout season

Housing: Needs to be housed in a pen, close to house or with other animals so that they are away from predators. Need cover from the weather. Lambs are pack animals and therefore hate to be alone. Lambs may be housed in the Ag Barn with a signed contract.

Work: Need to be fed twice per day and worked with every day. Lambs need to be taught to walk without a lead, with the hand placed under the jaw and they need to be able to be set up and touched by anyone as well as brace. Lambs require vigorous exercise if you want to compete in the show ring.

Hogs

Hogs are a great starter project for the young or older students with patience and commitment to train the pig to walk. Hogs stay low to the ground, don't require bracing or handling but should not be considered an easy animal. Hogs should be considered for those that are willing to put in a lot of time and energy feeding on a schedule and don't mind having to change something on the fly. Pigs are only walked with a pig whip therefore a lot of time is needed to practice. The student must be able to train the pig to walk and be able to control their pig with just a pig whip.

Cost: \$400-\$\$\$\$

Feed: ~\$30/bag + additives throughout year

Housing: Needs to be housed in a secure pen that cannot be escaped from by going underneath (pigs root and are impeccable escape artists). Pigs should be housed in an area where predators will not be a nuisance. Need cover from weather (they sunburn easily, and can get sick with slight weather changes). Pigs may be housed in the Ag Barn with a signed contract.

Work: Need to feed twice per day (sometimes more often, depending on special circumstances) and worked with every day. Pigs show by your guidance using a thin whip. While some think that pigs require little work to walk on the whip, they actually require a lot of time and energy. Pigs should be walked with their heads up and at a steady pace which requires the student to work with them on a daily basis.

Steers

Unless you already have a steer in your possession and it has been validated, it is too late to exhibit this animal at both the state level and county level. Steers are validated in June every summer for the following school year. For future interest, steers that are intended to show at the County Show or other Major Shows need to be purchased by the first week in June for the following show season.

Heifers

Heifers are a two year project. But they are a rewarding project as you get to hold on to it, raise it, and produce offspring if you wish to do so. You have to have a place to put your heifer at the end of the show career as you retain ownership of the livestock. Cattle are shown by leading on a halter and setting their feet up properly with a shoe stick. The most time an energy goes into halter breaking and grooming. Once a heifer is halter broke then all the work goes into grooming, setting up cattle in a show ring is fairly easy. The last chance to validate for heifers is in October. If you/your student are interested in a heifer project, please email kchapman@itascaisd.net with more questions. Heifers need to be purchased extremely soon. I need to know if you want a heifer no later than 8/25/2021.

Ms. Chapman would be happy to help you in finding quality livestock for show projects so please feel free to use her if you are interested in purchasing an animal.

Animal projects are not limited to only the information listed and may sometimes require more. The price suggestions are also not concrete. This is just to give you an idea of what to expect. You may know of cheaper or more expensive sources. The most important thing to note is that any animal project requires work and dedication. It is our responsibility to see that all animals are taken care of in the proper way. Animal projects are not projects that can be forgotten about and neglected.

LDE's, CDE's, SDE's and other Competitive FFA Events

The FFA is much more than just showing animals. Besides building projects or showing animals students can compete on seasonal competitive teams. In the fall is when Leadership Development Events (LDE) take place. These involve speaking and presenting. In the spring Career Development Events (CDE) and Speaking Development Events (SDE) take place. CDE's are competitions that can prepare you for different careers in Agriculture. These are great opportunities for students to be actively involved in our FFA chapter. These competitive events help develop confidence, leadership, employability skills, and much

more. Please contact Ms. Chapman if you are interested in participating in any of these competitive events. These are for High School members only.

I would love for you to participate in ANYTHING FFA! If you have any questions, please let me know.

-Ms. Chapman