

UConn



Big E 4-H Dog Program Packet
UConn 4-H Dog Program

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Introduction

The purpose of the application process is to support the success of 4-H youth exhibitor. The Big E program builds on the experiences gained through 4-H and county fair dog shows and offers the opportunity for further growth. Because participation in The Big E can be challenging, this application process is designed to begin important conversations about responsibility, expectations and whether the program is a good fit at this point in time.

These conversations are important for both youth and adults to ensure a positive and successful experience. The purpose of this packet is to provide the information to help families decide if their child would like to apply for a Big E 4-H Dog Program Exhibitor spot.

The Big E 4-H Dog Program is a 3-day, 2-night stay held at the Eastern States grounds, offering youth a unique opportunity for education and leadership development. During the event, exhibitors represent their work, themselves, the UConn 4-H program and The Big E.

Because exhibitors spend much of their time in public settings and shared dormitory spaces, they are expected to maintain high standards of responsibility, organization, and conduct with help and guidance from caring, trained and vetted adults. State chaperones, barn chaperones, state educators, and Big E committee members work together to support exhibitors and help them safely and successfully navigate their responsibilities and daily schedules.

Objectives for New England 4-H Programs at The Big E

Participation in the 4-H program at The Big E provides youth with opportunities to be recognized for their achievements while representing the values and educational mission of 4-H. Through interactive exhibits, public engagement, shows, and educational activities, exhibitors help increase public awareness of 4-H programs and showcase the accomplishments of young people across New England. The experience also offers unique educational opportunities that may not be available within individual states, encouraging personal growth, leadership development, and collaboration with other youth and adults from diverse backgrounds.

The Written Application

The written application includes three parts: a cover page, a four-page exhibitor application, and a Leader's Recommendation form. This application asks for two types of responses, lists of the youth experiences, and short essay responses sharing the youth thoughts and perspectives.

This balance of experience and reflection allow for the development of a strong application, whether the applicant has only a couple of years in 4-H with limited experience or many years with a wide range of experiences.

This application is for youth interested in participating as exhibitors in the Big E 4-H Dog Program. Exhibitors may apply for one of two roles: **Delegate** or **Steward**. All exhibitors compete and participate in the variety of program activities. Delegates participate with their project dog. Stewards do not bring a dog and are paired with a dog for competitions. Delegate competitions are scheduled before the Steward competitions. Stewards assist with Delegate competitions and gain valuable hands-on experience working ringside with the Big E 4-H Dog Program Secretary, Judges Committee members, and judges.

Choosing to apply as a Delegate or Steward is an individual decision. Each option provides an opportunity to align with the youth's skills and goals, -- and equally important, their dog's condition and ability-- in that particular year.

The appendix provides sample responses and scoring rubrics to help guide you through the application process.

Job Description: 4-H Delegate to The Big E – UConn 4-H Dog Program

The UConn 4-H Delegate to The Big E serves as a representative of UConn and the 4-H program. Delegates participate in educational, competitive, team-building, and public outreach activities that highlight the value and impact of 4-H across New England.

Purpose: Delegates support the mission of New England 4-H programs

- Promoting 4-H educational opportunities and achievements
- Representing youth and volunteer excellence
- Engaging with the public and increasing visibility of 4-H
- Participating as active youth leaders in a high-quality dog program

Eligibility Requirements

- Enrolled UConn 4-H member in Z-Suite and at least 12 and not yet 19 as of January 1
- Minimum of 2 years (counting the present year) as a registered 4-H member
- Has owned/leased, trained and verified (with the county office) their dog by June 1
- Selected through state 4-H processes

Primary Responsibilities

Expectation: Throughout the program all Exhibitors must attend all sessions and remain with their state delegation or with approval from their chaperones to be with another Dog Program Delegation. Delegates are not to leave the Mallary Complex with family or friends except for scheduled meal time breaks.

Delegates are expected to fully participate in all program activities, including:

- Obedience and Fitting & Showmanship competitions
- Dog Knowledge and Quiz Bowl
- Opening and Closing Ceremonies

Animal Care

- Provide daily care: feeding, exercise, grooming
- Maintain clean crates (no soft sided) and barn areas
- Follow all health and welfare requirements

Representation & Conduct

- Serve as a positive ambassador for 4-H
- Demonstrate respect, responsibility, teamwork, and sportsmanship
- Follow all 4-H and Big E rules
- Help educate the public about 4-H dog programs

Attendance & Housing

- Arrive Friday (3:00–5:00 PM); depart Sunday (~5:00 PM)
- Stay in assigned dormitory housing
- Participate in the full program
- Communicate with chaperones so they know where you are at all times

Dress Code- must follow full Big E dress code- see appendix- pgs. 19 and 20

- Wear neat, clean, and appropriate clothing
- Closed-toe, non-slip shoes required in the Mallary Complex
- Follow official show uniform guidelines when required
- Wear name tag and maintain a professional appearance

Health, Safety & Supervision

- Submit required health forms
- Follow all safety and conduct policies
- Follow directions from staff and chaperones

Job Description: 4-H Steward to The Big E – UConn 4-H Dog Program

The 4-H Dog Program Steward is a youth leadership role within The Big E 4-H Dog Program. Stewards support event coordination, assist exhibitors, and help ensure activities run smoothly while also competing and representing the 4-H program

Purpose: Stewards support the mission of New England 4-H programs

- Supporting educational and competitive activities
- Promoting a positive, inclusive environment
- Assisting with program organization and delivery
- Enhancing public understanding of 4-H
- Serving as youth leaders and role models

Eligibility Requirements

- Enrolled 4-H member in a New England state
- Ages 12–18 as of January 1
- Selected through state 4-H processes

Primary Responsibilities

Expectation: Throughout the program all Exhibitors must attend all sessions and remain with their state delegation or ,with approval from their chaperones, to be with another Dog Program Delegation. Stewards are not to leave the Mallary Complex with family or friends except for scheduled meal time breaks.

Stewards are expected to fully participate in all program activities, including:

- Fitting & Showmanship competitions
- Participate in Quiz Bowl, Opening and closing Ceremonies, and all activities
- Take Dog Knowledge online and on-site test
- Follow all health and welfare requirements

Assist judges, coordinators, and volunteers

- Help manage the flow of events (rings, staging areas)
- Maintain organization and assist with programs as assigned

Representation & Conduct

- Serve as a positive ambassador for 4-H
- Demonstrate respect, responsibility, teamwork, and sportsmanship
- Follow all 4-H and Big E rules
- Help educate the public about 4-H dog programs

Attendance & Housing

- Arrive Friday (3:00–5:00 PM); depart Sunday (~5:00 PM)
- Stay in assigned dormitory housing
- Participate in the full program
- Communicate with chaperones so they know where you are at all times

Dress Code- must follow full Big E dress code- see appendix- pgs. 19 and 20

- Wear neat, clean, and appropriate clothing
- Closed-toe, non-slip shoes required in the Mallary Complex
- Follow official show uniform guidelines when required
- Wear name tag and maintain a professional appearance

Health, Safety & Supervision

- Submit required health forms
- Follow all safety and conduct policies
- Follow directions from staff and chaperones

Big E 4-H Dog Program Exhibitor Application Guidelines

Dear 4-H Dog Program Leaders & Members,

The Big E selection process has three requirements. 4-H Dog Project members must complete a two-part qualifier. Part one is a three-tiered application and Part Two is showing in a qualifying 4-H Dog Show (list of qualifying **4-H dog shows below**)

The qualifying 4-H Dog Shows are a great opportunity for all to showcase skills and gain experience!

Once accepted as an Exhibitor to the Big E 4-H Dog Program (successfully completed parts one and two) all participants with at least one parent/guardian must attend a mandatory orientation meeting on September 14, 2026, at the UConn 4-H Tolland office. Please look over this letter and the application carefully. The dates for the Big E 4-H Dog Program are October 2-4, 2026. You may attend the Big E for as many years as you are eligible.

The *Application* Process (scoring rubric and application samples are in Appendix)

Part One:

The First Tier will consist of the cover page and application being turned into their home county office by June 23, 2026.

In this first tier, the applicant's home county office will look over the applications for completeness and correctness. Signature of the application by the home county office is an endorsement. If the applicant passes the first tier, the application will be sent onto the second tier from the applicant's county office by July 1, 2026.

The Second Tier is a state level selection, based on the applications. Multiple people will score the applications, and the scores will be averaged. The first-year applicants need to score 75%, second year applicants need to score 80% and all other applicants need to score 85% to be deemed as qualified. Those who pass the second tier, will be invited to the third-tier virtual interview. See appendix for scoring rubric and a sample application.

The Third Tier is a virtual interview to be scheduled and held on either July 9th or 10th 2026. Applicants will be given the opportunity to sign up for a virtual interview time slot. If preferred, an in-person interview can be scheduled to be held at the Tolland Extension Center. Your application will have to pass the first two tiers for you to be asked to join us at the final interview. A third-tier interview is mandatory for all applicants passing the first and second tiers.

All applicants will be notified of the final decision to Part One of the application by e-mail on July 16th.

Part Two:

Show at a qualifying 4-H county dog show. Qualifying shows dates are included below. Check that you apply to each show by their deadline.

Exhibitor/Steward applicants must be a 4-H member for a minimum of 2 years and 12-19 years of age as of January 1, 2026. Applicants must have owned or leased their dog before June 1, 2026, and they must have a Dog Project Verification form on file at their local 4-H office. If applicant has an alternate dog, that dog must also have a Dog Project Verification form on file. It is strongly recommended that an applicant's maturity be considered. If the applicant does not have good time management skills (i.e., being able to independently juggle dog's needs, meals, show schedules, and personal needs, without parental guidance), then they should not apply. The program at the Big E will keep the Exhibitors and Stewards very busy. Parent/Guardian, friends and family are not allowed in the kennels once the cars are unloaded.

Big E 4-H Dog Program Exhibitor Application Guidelines

Any 4-Her who has a parent or guardian as a leader must have another leader or their local 4-H Educator fill out their recommendation. The successful applicant should be a well-prepared 4-Her who works well in a group and can take direction from adults. Our goal is for the Exhibitors and Stewards to have a fun, positive learning experience, and selection is the first step to insuring this. If you have any questions regarding the application or selection process, please contact Maryann at 860-875-3331 or tolland@uconn.edu Leave a message, and we will get back to you.

Dates to remember: Part One

Verification forms due June 1, 2026

First Tier June 23, 2026

Second Tier July 1, 2026

Third Tier July 9-10, 2026

Final Decision E-MAIL July 16, 2026

Dates to remember: Part Two: Qualifying 4-H Dog Shows

Fairfield County 4-H Dog Show: June 20, Obedience Dog Training Club, Oxford, CT

Middlesex/New Haven 4-H Fair Dog Show: Durham Fairgrounds, Durham, CT

Hampden County 4-H Fair Dog Show: July 25 at the Eastern States Exposition, West Springfield, MA

Tolland County 4-H Fair Dog Show: August 8 Tolland Agriculture Center, Vernon CT

Hartford County 4-H Fair Dog Show: August 15 Four Town Fair Grounds, Somers, CT

Big E Orientation: September 14, 2026

Big E 4-H Dog Program Friday-Sunday October 2-4, 2026

Blank Page

UConn 4-H Big E Dog Program Exhibitor Selection Process: Cover Sheet

To be filled out by Applicant and must accompany application.

Name of Applicant _____

Address _____

Phone _____ Email _____ Zip _____

I wish to apply to be a UConn Delegate or Steward to Big E 4-H Dog Program

_____ Delegate _____ Steward

Office use only

TIER 1

Due June 23rd at your County Office

<i>Arrived</i>	<i>Date</i>	Office use only – please circle
Verification Form due June 1		Completed yes no
Application due in Tolland July 1		Signed yes no
		Completed. yes no

I recommend that this application be forwarded to Tier 2.

_____ Educator

_____ Date

TIER 2

APPLICATION

Tier 2 SCORE _____

TIER 3

INTERVIEW

Tier 3 SCORE _____

TOTAL SCORE _____

UConn 4-H Big E Dog Program Exhibitor Selection Process: Cover Sheet

Office Use Only

Applicants name:

ACCEPTED Yes No

Strengths of application

Ways to strengthen application for next time

Office use only: Letter sent _____ Date _____ Signature _____

UConn Big E 4-H Dog Program Exhibitor Application

Check one: ___ 1st yr. Delegate ___ 2nd yr. Delegate ___ 3rd yr. or more Delegate
 ___ 1st yr. Steward ___ 2nd yr. Steward ___ 3rd yr. or more Steward

Date(s) as previous Delegate/Steward _____

If selected, you must attend the virtual interview July 9 or 10, show in a qualifying 4-H dog show, and attend the in-person orientation meeting with a parent/guardian on Sept 14, 2026.

Send or drop off this application to your home county 4-H office (must be received by June 23, 2026). Applicant must be at least 12 years of age as of January 1, 2026, and a 4-H member for a minimum of 2 years.

Leaders: please complete the evaluation section on page 5 and send to *your home county 4-H office* (must be received by June 23, 2026).

please type using black font color or print clearly using blue or black ink.

Name _____

Home Mailing Address _____

Town _____ State _____ Zip Code _____

Age _____ (as of 1/1/2026)
Date of Birth _____ Grade _____ Gender _____

Home Phone Number _____ Cell Number _____

Parent/Guardian 1 Name _____ Cell Number _____

Parent/Guardian 2 Name _____ Cell Number _____

Parent(s) 1 Email _____ 2 Email _____

Emergency Contact Number _____ Name _____

Years as a 4-H Club Member _____ County _____

Dog's Call Name _____ Sex of Dog _____ Age of Dog _____

Breed of Dog _____ Color of Dog _____

Date acquired _____ Owned _____ Leased _____ Date of Lease _____

note: you may apply for either a Big E 4-H Dog Program Exhibitor or Steward (dogless). You may not apply for both positions in the same year. Please add additional pages as needed.

Big E 4-H Exhibitor Application

Delegate Photo

On this page, please tape, paste or scan a clear 5" x 7" photo of you and your dog together. This photo will not be returned to you. Please do not staple.

Big E 4-H Exhibitor Application

This section of the application is made up of fill-in lists and short essay questions.

List the years and activities you have participated in the 4-H Dog Project on the county, state or regional level.

Year	Level	Activity Description

Use additional paper as needed.

What do you work on in your project with your dog and what are your goals for this year?

List any awards you have won in any/all county UConn 4-H Dog Show.

Year	Activity	Award

Use additional paper as needed.

What is your philosophy of competition and sportsmanship?

Big E 4-H Exhibitor Application

List any a club, fair, county or state leadership role you have held. Please list each with the date held.

Date	Leadership role	Platform club, fair, other(if other, explain other)	Level: county, state, region, national, international

Use additional paper as needed.

What is your leadership style and/or philosophy of leadership?

List any demonstrations, public speeches/presentations, or community service projects you have done, with 4-H or other group. Be specific. Please list each with date accomplished.

Date	Public Speaking Engagement	Date	Community Service

Use additional paper as needed.

What does civic engagement mean to you and how prevalent is it in your life?

Big E 4-H Exhibitor Application

List all other 4-H county or state activities/events you have attended in the last two years. Please note your participation level (i.e., planning committee, participant, etc.) and the dates of the event.

Activity Name	Activity Date	Participation Level	Virtual or Live

Use additional paper as needed.

In your 4-H dog project, what have you learned by caring for, training, and working with you dog?

I understand that the June 9th or 10th interview, showing in a qualifying 4-H Dog Show, and the September 14th orientation is part of the selection process and are mandatory. One or more parents/legal guardians must also attend the September 14th Orientation.

Applicant's Signature

Date

Parent or Legal Guardian's Signature

Date

Big E 4-H Exhibitor Application

Leader Recommendation

Give This Form to Your 4-H Leader.

Please provide a thorough evaluation of this applicant's readiness to serve as an Exhibitor – Delegate or Steward. Consider their leadership, cooperation, time management, independence, maturity, project knowledge and their ability to meet the expectations of The Big E 4-H Dog Program. In your recommendation, please include a balanced discussion of the applicant's strengths as well as areas where they may need growth. Your perspective is important in helping determine the applicant's readiness.

Applicants do not see this evaluation. Please use additional paper as needed.

After Completing This Page, Send To: The Applicant's Home County 4-H Office.
Must Be Received by June 23, 2026.

APPLICANT'S NAME _____

Leader's Signature

Date



The University of Connecticut complies with all applicable federal and state laws regarding non-discrimination, equal opportunity and affirmative action, including the provision of reasonable accommodations for persons with disabilities. Extension program participants with disabilities may request reasonable accommodations to address limitations resulting from a disability. For more information, please contact the UConn Extension Civil Rights Liaison at extensioncivilrights@uconn.edu.

Appendix:

Scoring Rubrics:

Complete/Legible	Answer Content	Project work	Leadership/Independence	Other Activities
15 pts	15 pts	20 pts	20 pts	10 pts

This application supports youth at all experience levels—from beginners to those with more advanced backgrounds—in creating a compelling submission that reflects their readiness for the Big E 4-H Dog Program. For questions that include both a table and a written response, each part contributes equally to the score. Use the table to outline your experience and the essay to explain your perspective or style. Below are examples of how to fill out the tables.

Big E 4-H Exhibitor Application Sample

For your answers in the application form, please use black font color if typing and black or blue ink if hand printing.

1. List the years and activities you have participated in the 4-H Dog Project on the county, state or regional level. Example of county level is club project meetings; state level is UConn 4-H Dog Clinic and regional level is previous Big E 4-H dog Programs. **see example in red**. If you don't have any activities, write "None" (not N/A) **see example in green**

Year	Level	Activity
None		
2025-2026	Club	Attended monthly project meetings with my dog
2026	State	UConn 4-H Dog Clinic
2025	Regional	Thanksgiving Classic Cluster Shows

2. List any awards you have won in any/all county UConn 4-H Dog Show. **see example in red**. If you don't have any activities, write "None" (not N/A) **see example in green**

Year	Activity	Award
None		
2025	Fairfield County 4-H Dog Show	Blue Danish Showmanship

3. List any a club, fair, county or state leadership role you have held. Please list each with the date held. Please list each with the date held. **see example in red**. If you don't have any activities, write "None" (not N/A) **see example in green**

Date	Level	Role
None		
2025-2026	County	Club Jr. Leader

4. List any demonstrations, public speeches/presentations, or community service projects you have done in 4-H. Be specific. Please list each with date presented. **see example in red.** If you don't have any activities, write "None" (not N/A) **see example in green**

Date	Public Speaking Engagement	Date	Community Service
None			
11/2025	Individual Poster at club meeting	11/25	Club Food Drive
08/2024	Club- Club Board at the Fair		

5. List all other 4-H county or state activities/events you have attended in the last two years. Please note your participation level (i.e., planning committee, participant, etc.) and the dates of the event. **see example in red.** If you don't have any activities, write "None" (not N/A) **see example in green**

Activity Name	Activity Date	Participation Level	Virtual or In-person
None			
Ag Day at the Capital	March 2026	4-H Youth Exhibitor	In-person
Leadership Summit	November 2025	Participant	In-person

Do you know why for this form writing "None" is more accurate than writing "N/A"?

"N/A" stands for "not applicable" and should be used only when a question does not apply to your situation or is not relevant to your goal. For this program application, all categories apply to the 4-H experience, even if you do not have examples for each one just yet. Therefore, if you do not have an example, it is more accurate to write "None" instead of "N/A."

Dress Code: The Big E 4-H Dog Program:

It is an honor and a privilege to represent 4-H in the New England Dog Activity during The Big E. You are expected to dress respectfully in this role.

Chaperones reserve the right to ask you to change your clothing if they deem that it is not appropriate attire for a representative of the New England 4-H Dog Activity. You are also expected to behave and speak respectfully while you are representing 4-H during The Big E. Please be advised that the following dress code will be enforced for all youth members and adult chaperones participating in 4-H events and activities.

- a. Clothing: All clothing shall be neat, clean, acceptable in repair and appearance, and shall be worn within the bounds of decency and good taste as appropriate for 4-H events and activities. 4-H shirts and state logos are encouraged. Clean shorts, pants or dress jeans are encouraged.
- b. Articles of clothing which display profanity, products, or slogans which promote tobacco, alcohol, drugs, sex or that are in any other way distracting are prohibited.
- c. Members will be disqualified if they are wearing clothing advertising a kennel or breed.
- d. Excessively baggy or tight clothing is prohibited. No wide leg, loose fit pants.
- e. Items of clothing which expose bare midriffs (front or side), bare chests, visible cleavage, undergarments (including bra straps), or that are transparent (see-through) are prohibited. Blouse straps must be at least 2" wide. Please be advised that spaghetti straps, tank tops, shirts which expose a bare back, halter tops, and tube tops are prohibited.
- f. The inseam length of shorts is 4" or longer.
- g. Any clothing that must be continually adjusted while wearing to meet the dress code is inappropriate. For example, shirts that fall off the shoulder to expose undergarments, shirts that must be pulled down to cover midriff or pants that need to be pulled up to hide undergarments etc.
- h. No cut-off shorts, torn or frayed jeans will be permitted.
- i. Hair should be clean and neatly combed.
- j. For safety reasons, delegates must wear non-skid, closed toe footwear at all times throughout the multi-day event. Delegates may not appear barefoot; flip flops, sandals or clogs are not allowed
- k. Name tags are to be worn at all times while in Mallary except when exhibiting in Showmanship and Obedience.

Recommended Show Uniform

A clean white dress shirt or blouse or white 4-H T-shirt (may have 4-H clover emblem on left breast), or suit jacket, and green pants, culottes, skirt or jumper of appropriate length (no higher than half the knee cap).

Any shade of green will be allowed. No jeans or shorts are allowed. Points MAY be deducted if the recommended uniform is not worn. All delegates will be in official show uniform at all times while in the show ring area except when announced.

During inclement weather, approved 4-H delegate jackets (i.e. state or 4-H club clothing) or other outerwear is at the discretion of the committee. "Hoodies" and sweatshirts will NOT be allowed while showing, regardless of the weather.

No gum chewing or cell phone use in the show ring.

All adult leaders are asked to make sure that their 4-H delegation is meeting the dress code. Any adult leader from any state may respectfully address dress code issues when they are noticed, including youth and adults that are participating.

Exhibitors not adhering to the dress code will be excused from the ring