

Breaking My Silence

**By Dr. Brian Faris
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Howdy. I apologize for my lack of communication through the Cattle Connection since April, but we have had several exciting things happening in the 4-H Youth Livestock Program. We recently returned from Louisville, Kentucky after our State Livestock Judging and Skillathon Teams competed at the National Contests.

The Livestock team members included Billy Lewis, Leah Wilson, Joe White, and Callie McAdams. The team placed 18th in sheep, 22nd in swine, 19th in beef, 22nd in reasons, and after all the dust settled finished 19th Overall. Callie McAdams was the 10th High Individual in the Swine Division. I am very proud of these kids and feel they worked extremely hard and learned a great deal from this experience. I expect great things from them in future years either through serving as a 4-H member, volunteer, employee, etc. John Barnes and Milo Lewis served as alternates for this year's team, and traveled with us to Louisville sharpening their skills as they prepare to participate in a future National Livestock Judging Contest. We want to send out a special thanks to Mr. Alan Sharp (Sharp Farms), Mr. Carval Cheves (Clover C Farm), and Mr. Tony Matthis (Nichols Farms / NC Division) for allowing us to travel to their facilities and use their livestock to practice judging.

The Skillathon team members included Anna Pesta, Jacob Furr, Tom Devine, and Lisa Baxter. The team placed 1st in the Identification Division with Jacob Furr and Lisa Baxter gaining individual honors of 1st and 4th, respectively. The team finished 3rd in the Evaluation Division. In the Quality Assurance Division, the team finished in 1st place with Anna Pesta, Tom Devine, and Jacob Furr earning individual rankings of 1st, 3rd, and 5th, respectively. Finally, the individuals were announced for the Overall Individual Placings. Anna Pesta earned the honor of High Individual in the nation while Jacob Furr was 4th, Tom Devine was 7th, and Lisa Baxter was 9th in the nation. Still, it looked as though our team would finish 2nd after Wisconsin had the 2nd, 3rd, and 5th individuals overall (with only the top three scores counting). However, in 4-H, we continually stress the importance of team work. Our kids had forgotten that their team task scores had not been added to their individual scores. Once the final team scores had been added to the individual scores, North Carolina became the 2006 National Champion Skillathon team by 44 points showing that teamwork pays off at the end of the day. North Carolina has won the Skillathon Contest twice in the last three years and in 2006 will attempt to become the first team to win the contest three times and potentially the first to win in back to back years since the contest's beginning in 1999. Mr. Michael Alexander deserves special recognition for the job he did coaching this team, and Mrs. Susie Devine did a tremendous job assisting Mike by getting kids to practices and helping wherever possible. Each one of these individuals put their heart and soul into the task of bringing home a National Championship.

We want to extend a special thank you to the North Carolina Pork Council and Mr. Tony Matthis for providing funding for the trip to the National Contest. Additionally, we would like to thank those individuals who purchased sandwiches at the

Down East Bull Sale and specifically Mr. Roy Outlaw for allowing us to conduct that fund raising event. We will be attempting to make arrangements for the coach and team members of the National Champion Skillathon Team to receive trophy belt buckles in honor of their tremendous accomplishment. If anyone would like to contribute to that fund or any other area of the North Carolina 4-H Livestock Program, please contact me at 919/515-7722 or Mr. Jackie Helton with the 4-H Development Fund at 919/513-8254.

In other events, I am sure most of you know that we lost Ms. Anna Munday as our Youth Livestock Technician back in August. I want to give a hearty thank you to Anna for her service prior to and after my arrival. Anna, I certainly wish you the best of luck in the future. We have been able to fill the Youth Livestock Technician with another great individual. Many of you saw Mr. Brent Jennings in his first few days on the job just prior to and during the North Carolina State Fair. Brent is a native of North Carolina as he hails from Camden, North Carolina. He was a very successful 4-Her in the areas of judging and showing livestock. He attended Butler Community College in Kansas where he judged livestock at the Junior College level before returning to NC State to complete his undergraduate and soon his Master's degree in Agricultural Education. Brent helped coach the livestock judging team and traveled with us to Louisville. We are extremely excited to have Brent on board and doing a wonderful job. You can contact Brent at 919/515-4467 or brent_jennings@ncsu.edu.



From left to right: Dr. Brian Faris – Coach, Billy Lewis, Leah Wilson, Joe White, Callie McAdams, Mr. Brent Jennings - Coach



From left to right: Mr. Ernie Barnes – Awards Donor, Anna Pesta, Lisa Baxter, Jacob Furr, Tom Devine, Mr. Michael Alexander - Coach