

Youth for the Quality Care of Animals (YQCA) Fact Sheet

In the fall of 2017, Wisconsin replaced the MAQA (Meat Animal Quality Assurance) state program with the Youth for the Quality Care of Animals (YQCA) national program. This new and interactive program provides youth a number of options for an annual quality assurance youth certification. YQCA was created for youth in the Beef, Dairy, Goat, Poultry, Rabbit, Sheep, and Swine projects.

YQCA provides a common framework for food animal quality assurance programs which:

- **Strengthen the youth educational experience,**
- **Improve the care of food animals, and**
- **Promote a higher level of consumer food safety.**

This program allows youth to learn about other species of animals; not just the species they show. This program allows for the consistency of information being taught to youth in all states and in all species of animals.

YQCA content and modules demonstrate a progression of topic knowledge in designated age categories (Age as of January 1):

- **Junior (8-11)**
- **Intermediate (12-14)**
- **Senior (15-18)**
- **Young Adult (19-21)**

Each year, youth complete one new module in each the following categories:

- **Animal Welfare** (basic needs, proper animal handling, biosecurity, etc.),
- **Food Safety** (medications, medicated feeds, withdrawal times, avoiding residue, etc.)
- **Character Education** (ethics, goal setting, career exploration, etc.)

YQCA gives families more flexibility in gaining this required certification, which is more convenient to accommodate busy seasonal schedules. It's estimated that youth will spend roughly 60 minutes completing modules each year. Participating in the online program also saves money on fuel and food costs that can come with attending trainings.

YQCA illustrates the next generation of learning and can be offered to youth in a couple of ways:

1. **Online curriculum - a youth exhibitor annually will complete three interactive online modules and corresponding quizzes. This is available 24/7 which allows exhibitors flexibility to take the course at their convenience.**
2. **Face to face - Trainer led program by either Extension personnel, Agri-Science teachers or veterinarians that have gone through a certification training.**
3. **Online Exam – upon passing an online youth member can achieve more than 1 year of certification.**

YQCA replaced Wisconsin's MAQA program and the National Pork Board Youth PQA program, both of which are no longer in existence. Wisconsin 4-H and FFA leaders are pleased to share their joint support of this program which was implemented in Wisconsin starting in the fall of 2017. In addition, Wisconsin State Fair and other national exhibitions required certification in YQCA for participation in 2018.

Why quality assurance education?

- The livestock industry and business are constantly striving for high quality, wholesome products.
- All species organizations have quality assurance programs. BQA, FARM (Dairy), PQA, etc.
- Consumers are more interested in how and where their food is produced.
- United States exports a lot of pork and beef. If there is a poor experience, that market is lost and it impacts the whole industry.



Value of Quality Assurance Education?

- Most county programs provide education around grooming, showing and feeding. Very few offer specific information on the day to day management of animals, their facilities and their needs.
- This program also shares information related to sportsmanship, telling your story and young adult topics such as, stewardship, careers and hot topics in agriculture.
- Exhibitions and their partners value this education to minimize the incidence of unethical practices.
- Youth and parents are further removed from agriculture and how animals are raised and cared for.
- Need for consistent information from state to state.
- Wisconsin and Nebraska research indicates youth learn and put into practice what they gather from quality assurance education.

What is the cost?

- \$12/person/year for the online modules that are different each year.
- \$3/person/year for the face to face trainings.

Why the Cost?

- Online education increases cost due to managing the learning platform, however it increases the fun for the user and learning outcomes are greater.
- Development of creative modules where the information stays current.

Is YQCA required?

- Wisconsin State fair requires YQCA for Junior exhibitors for Beef, Sheep, Swine, Goats, Dairy, Poultry and Rabbits.
- This certification is highly encouraged for all youth in the aforementioned animal projects in Wisconsin.
- Counties should require YQCA!
- Processing plants & marketing channels require it.
- State fair, national junior swine association shows and other national shows require it.
- Conversations occur on further requirements.
- This is an annual certification.

Special features:

- The program was heavily peer reviewed and reviewed for youth age appropriateness.
- The online system gives youth options to receive the material. The system will read the material to youth so they can hear it.
- Coupons can be purchased to minimize the cost. Examples are: Producer groups, leader's councils, FFA alumni programs, etc.

Access to the program both online and face to face:

- Log into <http://yqca.org>
- Follow the step by step instructions.

You can keep up with Wisconsin YQCA by going to <http://fyi.uwex.edu/youthlivestock/yqca> or by following the Wisconsin Youth Livestock Program Facebook page.

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