

Cowley County 4-H/FFA Fair Grievance Policy

Revised Date: January 12, 2026

I. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to provide a clear, fair, and transparent process for resolving disputes or complaints related to Cowley County 4-H/FFA activities at the Cowley County Fair. This process ensures timely resolution while maintaining the integrity of events and programs.

II. Applicability

This policy applies to all Cowley County 4-H and FFA participants, families, and volunteers involved in Cowley County Fair events facilitated by the Cowley County Extension Office.

III. Definitions

- **Formal Grievance:** A formal written complaint regarding a specific incident or decision related to fair activities.
- **Anonymous Grievance:** a written complaint, but no further formal action is expected.
- **Incident:** An event or action that prompts a grievance.
- **Hearing Committee:** A group designated to review and decide on grievances.

IV. General Requirements

1. Written Submission

All grievances must be made in writing, signed, and dated. The grievance must clearly state the reason for the complaint or appeal and if it is a formal or anonymous grievance.

Anonymous grievances may be submitted to the Extension Office for informational purposes and documentation. This grievance will still require identification. The identity of the individual filing a grievance will be kept confidential to the greatest extent possible. Anonymous grievances will not be eligible for formal review or resolution under this policy.

While anonymous grievances help identify concerns, formal grievances with identified participants are necessary for hearings and decisions. Individuals are encouraged to file formally to ensure fair resolution.

2 . Submission Deadline

Grievances must be submitted to a Cowley County Extension Agent within 24 hours of the incident prompting the complaint.

3. Filing Fee

Each formal grievance must be accompanied by a \$25 cash deposit. The deposit will be refunded if the grievance is upheld and forfeited if denied. A filing fee is not required for anonymous grievances.

4. Confidentiality

The identity of the individual filing a grievance will be known to the Cowley County Extension Office and the hearing committee for purposes of review and resolution. However, the filer's identity will remain confidential to the public and will not be disclosed in any public setting, announcements, or documentation. All parties involved in the grievance process are expected to maintain this confidentiality.

V. Ineligible Grievances

Grievances will not be accepted for the following reasons:

- Decisions made by judges, judging committees and veterinarians (all decisions are final).
- Issues related to published Cowley County Extension deadlines or rules, including but not limited to:
 - Membership enrollment deadlines
 - Livestock ownership and tagging deadlines
 - Fair entry deadlines
 - County program pre-registration deadlines

VI. Grievance Hearing Process

1. Notification

Upon receipt of a qualified grievance, a hearing committee member will notify all involved parties within 24 hours. The notification will include the time and location for a formal hearing.

2. Formal Hearing

This will be a meeting where the grievance is reviewed with a fair and respectful process for all parties. Ground rules will be established, and time limits will be enforced. The grievance submitter may request to participate via phone, video

conference, or written statement if attending in person poses a safety concern or undue hardship.

3. Involved Parties

Involved parties may include:

- The individual against whom the grievance is made
- Fair Department Superintendent
- Fair Board Representatives (if applicable)
- Relevant witnesses or individuals with pertinent information

Note: Events will not be delayed or interrupted due to any grievance.

VII. Hearing Committee

The hearing committee may include, but is not limited to:

- Extension Agent(s)
- Fair Board Representative(s)
- Fair Department Superintendent
- Project Leader or 4-H Club Leader of the involved parties
- FFA Advisor(s) (if applicable)
- 4-H PDC Member
- Extension Council Executive Board Member

Conflict of Interest: Committee members must recuse themselves if they have a direct stake in the grievance.

VIII. Decision and Documentation

The committee will issue a written decision within 48 hours of the hearing. Copies will be provided to the original grievance filer and a copy will remain on file at the Extension Office. Records will be kept confidential and accessible only to authorized personnel for 2 years.

Based on the significance of the grievance, the formal hearing committee can recommend further action by the Cowley County Extension Council Executive Board that could include penalties.

If multiple anonymous grievances are received regarding the same issue, the Extension Office may initiate an internal review to determine if corrective action is needed, even if formal hearings cannot occur without identified participants.

IX. Escalation and Final Action

The hearing committee reserves the right to forward the grievance to the Cowley County Extension Council Executive Board for further review or potential penalties. All decisions are final at the conclusion of this process.

X. Accessibility and Accommodations

Reasonable accommodations will be provided for individuals with disabilities or language barriers (e.g., interpreters, accessible formats).