
2025-2026 Junior Herd Builder Program

Program Registration Deadline: **September 17, 2025**

Orientation: **September 19, 2025**

Module Deadline: **November 7, 2025**

Heifer Entry Form Deadline: **November 14, 2025**

Recordbook Deadline: **May 8, 2026**

Live Program Evaluation: **May 15, 2026**

Program Overview:

The Junior Herd Builder Program is open to FFA or 4-H members currently enrolled in **8th-12th grade**. Participants will develop a pen of heifers for the purpose of future production or sale. Participants will be responsible for securing three (3) heifers of similar age and genetics to develop through the beef production cycle utilizing the *UGA Extension Beef Management Calendar* as a guide.

Objectives:

- Expose youth to the beef industry of Georgia
- Educate and serve the beef industry of Georgia
- Enhance leadership, decision-making and management skills of youth participants
- Promote animal and environmental stewardship

Recommended

Spring Heifers

Heifer ages: December 2024 -February 2025

Heifers Weaned: August-October 2025

Recommended Breeding Period: February-April 2026

Fall Heifers

Heifer Ages: September-November 2024

Heifers Weaned: April-June 2025

Recommended Breeding Period: December 2025 -February 2026

Rules

1. Participants must be a member of GJCA or GCA.
2. Participants must provide primary daily and managerial care to the pen of heifers.
3. Participants must become BQA Certified and abide by its practices.
4. BQA certification can be obtained in Module 1 of the online learning section. Additional module topics include: herd health, reproduction, nutrition, selection, fencing and facilities, economics, forages, and parasite control.
5. Participants are encouraged to work with their local Extension Agent and/or Agricultural Educator for assistance and guidance throughout the program.
6. Registered or commercial females are accepted.
 - a. Registered females must have copy of registration papers (original is not required)
 - b. Commercial females should know the breed type
 - c. Registered and commercial female pens will be evaluated in the same division.
7. Birthdates should be known when submitted. Heifers older than three years by the conclusion of the contest will be disqualified.
 - a. Program management reserves the right to disqualify any heifer with three-year-old teeth regardless of registration papers.
8. Heifers must have a valid and current health certificate along with vaccination records

End of Program Evaluation

Participants will be responsible for transporting their pen of heifers to the evaluation site (to be determined at a later date). Participants will give a presentation regarding their managerial decisions, goals achieved and knowledge gained during the program. Additionally, an interview portion along with live pen evaluation will be conducted.

Evaluation Criteria

- 20% Visual Appraisal
 - Weight
 - Pregnancy Status
 - Body Condition Score
 - Frame Score
 - Evaluation

- 40% Business Plan/Record book
 - Short-term and long-term goals
 - Budget/Expenses
 - Nutrition Program (hay, feed, supplements, grazing)
 - Health Protocols (vaccinations, deworming)
 - Veterinarian Visits
 - Breeding Program

- 40% Interview/Presentation
 - 10-15 min Presentation
 - 10 min interview

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Q: Do I have to buy 3 heifers for this program?

A: No. While buying heifers is an option, heifers can be leased or borrowed as long as you are the primary caregiver during the contest.

Q: Where can I keep my heifers?

A: Your heifers can be kept wherever is best for you. School farms, neighbors/friends farm, parents farm and anywhere else you can think of.

Q: Will there be regional contest?

A: Depending on the level of participation and where the participants are from will determine if regional contest will be established.

Q: Do I have to bring my heifers to the program evaluation?

A: Yes, during the program evaluation heifers are evaluated along with your record book and presentation.

Q: Is there a format I should follow for my record book?

A: No. We do not provide a template for record books as we want this contest to be as realistic as possible. However, you are welcome to use whatever template you would like for record keeping. Some good options are Florida Beef Cattle Ranch Record Book, CattleMax, or something similar to either of these.