



1930: The first year of FFA in Minnesota. One of the six items in the first annual State FFA Program of Work (now known as POA) was “Sponsor a suitable exhibit at the State Fair to show the work of the boys in agriculture.”

1937: The Minnesota State FFA Band, directed by L.C. Wogensen, chapter advisor from Litchfield, performed before a grandstand audience at the State Fair.

1947: FFA Ag Displays were exhibited for the first time in the new Agriculture Horticulture Building.

1948: At least 37 members, may be a few more*, exhibited a total of 108 swine and 22 head of sheep. Historical documents point to 12, 13 or 14 FFA chapters participating in the first show.* Original chapters (number of exhibitors): Albert Lea (1), Austin (13 or 14), Brainerd (1), Glencoe (2), Hector (1), Kenyon (1*), Mankato (1*), Mountain Lake (5), New Prague (4), New Richland (2 or 3), Northfield (2), Olivia (1), Owatonna (2) and Waconia/St. Cloud/St. Bonifacius (1). The State Fair provided \$2,000 or \$3,100 in cash premiums for FFA shows.

1949: Dairy cattle were added. The FFA Ag Displays were moved to the Education Building. Additional FFA chapters participating: Cloquet, Delano, Hibbing, Hinckley, Hutchinson, LeCenter, New Ulm, Norwood, Red Wing, Sauk Centre, Winthrop and Worthington.**

1950: In only its 3rd year the FFA show had grown to 624 head of livestock shown by 152 boys from 40 chapters.** Additional FFA chapters participating: Glenville, Marshall and Montevideo**

1951: Beef cattle were added and the first Premier Trophy Award was presented to Northfield. Additional FFA chapters participating: Ada, Farmington, Lakeville, Minnesota Lake, Rushford and Willmar**

1952: Livestock and dairy judging contests were added. The swine show was canceled due to an outbreak for V.E. disease. Additional FFA chapters participating: Fairmont and Milaca**

1953: Livestock entries exceeded 1,000 head shown by 260 members from 55 chapters. The first Parade of Champions was held. Additional FFA chapters participating: Jackson**

1954: Additional FFA chapters participating: Frazee**

1955: This year is the first known documented mention of the State Fair being the world's largest FFA show, a title that is still held today! Crops were added. Additional FFA chapters participating: Climax, Felton, Hawley, Moorhead and St. James.**

1956: The FFA Children's Barnyard was added by the Mountain Lake FFA chapter under the direction of their advisor, James Crawford. Arnold Harder, their chapter vice president, served as the first student manager, a role he repeated the next year. Approximately 250,000 visitors went through the barnyard in its first year. The FFA Children's Barnyard became the Miracle of Birth Center in 2001 and moved to its current location in 2006 with the donation from CHS. KARE 11 took over the space that the FFA Children's Barnyard occupied for its first 50 years. Additional FFA chapters participating: Echo and Forest Lake.**

1957: The Tractor Driving Contest debuted.*** The State Fair added the FFA Chapter House next to the FFA Children's Barnyard to serve as a place of lodging for the student attendants. The FFA Chapter House was financed by Minnesota FFA to be a "home away from home" for its members attending the State Fair, and it cost \$7,800 to build. The Minnesota State Agricultural Society provided the land and landscaping. Minnesota's Governor Orville Freeman visited the FFA Chapter House and signed the guestbook. Over the years Governors Karl Rolvag, Wendell Anderson and Elmer Anderson, as well as Vice President Hubert H. Humphrey, also visited the FFA Chapter House.** Additional FFA chapters participating: Halstad.**

1958: FFA Farm Mechanics (today FFA Agriculture Technology) was added. The first American Dairy Association of Minnesota award was given to the FFA chapter having the best seven animals with Hutchinson FFA being the first winner. This award still exists today. The livestock show surpassed 2,000 head. Additional FFA chapters participating: Hastings, Jordan, Lake Crystal, Mapleton and Staples.**

1959: WCCO radio started broadcasting a children's story hour from the FFA Chapter House.

1960: The FFA Tractor Driving competition was added***. Approximately 1,000 boys participated in State Fair FFA activities.

1961: Premiums for the FFA shows neared \$10,000.

1963: A special pen was set up in the FFA Children's Barnyard for photos. Youngsters could hold a calf and get their picture taken. This addition received nationwide publicity in farm-city week promotional pamphlets.

1964: The first D.K. Baldwin Award was presented. It was called the "Best of Everything" Award and is based on the recipient's length of participation in the state fair FFA livestock show and his qualities of leadership, sportsmanship, citizenship and personal development.

1965: Mountain Lake won its 10 th Premier Chapter Award since 1951. They had 40 exhibitors and 250 head of livestock from one chapter!

1967: The first annual FFA Egg Laying Contest took place. It was won by Richard Ramstad of St. Francis FFA. To date over 35,000 head of livestock had been exhibited by 3,500 members, and over a quarter of a million dollars in premiums were awarded since 1948.

1970: The first female FFA members showed at the state fair. Connie Lewis of Jasper won the Demonstration Competition. The first FFA Turkey Gobbling Contest took place. Mark McCulley's Turkey named Mac won after gobbling 150 times in 20 minutes. The commissioner of agriculture served as the official judge. A horse show was also added. It was claimed to be the first FFA Horse Show in the nation, but this was the only year this event took place during the fair! Debbie Nelson of Mabel-Canton FFA was first and only winner of the horsemanship award. The next year the show was still held at the fairgrounds but not during the fair, following that year it moved to the Scott County Fair Grounds.

1971: A daily turkey weight guessing competition was added to the goggling contest at the children's barnyard.

1972: The 25 th year of FFA at the Minnesota State Fair. Over 2,000 head of livestock were shown by 457 members from about 100 chapters, 230 crops exhibits were shown by 100 members, 450 members represented 150 chapters in the judging contests, and 400 educational and ag mechanics exhibits and demonstrations from over 200 chapters were displayed in the Education Building. By this year the FFA Children's Barnyard had attracted over 4 million visitors! Donna Bauck of New York Mills showed that females belonged in the FFA competitions at the State Fair, she beat 217 other individuals to win the general livestock judging contest and had four reserve champions from the 39 head of sheep and swine she exhibited. Four other young ladies won champion ribbons this year as well. Carcass contests were added in swine and sheep divisions.

1973: Commercial Beef Heifer and Crossbred Gilt Classes were added, a departure from a pruebred only livestock show.

1975: FFA Children's Barnyard exhibits included sheep shearing demonstrations from Winthrop FFA member. In addition, the state officers marked up a steer for display in the barnyard to show meat cuts and current prices per pound.

1976: The first annual FFA Horticulture Booth contest (now known as Landscape Design and Construction Contest) was held. Rochester FFA won the contest followed by Anoka FFA. A four handed milking contest with celebrity contestants provided entertainment in the FFA Children's Barnyard. The first annual horse harnessing contest was held.

1979: The first female judge, Evelyn Stransky, was employed. Fridley FFA placed first in both the all-day demonstration in the education building and the horticulture display in the Agriculture Horticulture building.

1980: FFA Children's Barnyard lifetime visitors top 5 million. Displays held this year included sheep shearing and horse shoeing. Livestock exhibited in the FFA show since its inception is more than 60,000 head shown by more than 3,000 members.

1981: Sixty-one members competed in the Safe Tractor Driving Contest and Alan Libbensneir from the St. Cloud Technical FFA Chapter won.

1982: Special activities at the FFA Children's Barnyard included demonstrations on meat processing, lawn mower safety and fruits/vegetables.

1984: A terminal steer show was initiated.

1985: A Grade Holstein class was offered for the first time.

1993: Julie Grass, the first female assistant superintendent, was appointed. She oversaw the swine division.

1997: All market hogs were tested using ultrasound technology for the first time.

2019: More than 2,043 head of livestock, 248 ag mechanics exhibits and 971 crops entries were shown by 1,153 FFA members from 117 chapters. Plus, seven landscape booths, 11 tractor drivers and more than 100 members in the livestock and dairy judging contests.

2020: Despite the COVID pandemic shutting down the State Fair and most all other events in the summer of this year, them FFA crop show still took place as most of the entries were prepared and/or collected before the start of the pandemic. This gave FFA the distinction of having the only official state fair award winners on record this year. *Historical documents are not in agreement about the participation of Kenyon, Mankato, St. Cloud, St. Bonifacius and Waconia.

**We know these details are incomplete if you have any information to assist in making this history page better and more complete, please contact the FFA superintendent.

***Historical documents are not in agreement about the first year of the tractor driving competition.