

A starburst-shaped logo with the text "GET IN THE SPIRIT" in white, slanted, uppercase letters on a dark orange background.

GET IN THE  
SPIRIT

# Iowa State Fair

## 2026 Little Learners

A vertical orange arrow pointing downwards with the word "FUN" in white, uppercase letters and "Here" in white, cursive script below it.

FUN  
Here

Welcome to the Iowa State Fair! Here, children of all ages can enjoy over 20 educational destinations. Here is a guide to what each learning destination entails, with included activity ideas.

### 1. Country School

Hours: 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Step back in time at the Country Schoolhouse on the Iowa State Fairgrounds! Nestled on the corner before Pioneer Hall, the one-room schoolhouse is a charming glimpse into Iowa's educational past. Built in 1886 and lovingly preserved, the schoolhouse showcases what rural learning looked like over a century ago, complete with wooden desks, chalkboards and vintage textbooks. During the Fair, visitors can ring the bell and even try their hand at old-fashioned lessons. It's a nostalgic stop that's both educational and heartwarming.

### 2. Richard L. Easter Museum Complex

Hours: 9 a.m. to 8 p.m.

The Richard L. Easter Museum Complex at the Iowa State Fair is a must-see destination that brings Fair history to life through engaging exhibits and preserved artifacts. Located northeast of Pioneer Hall, the complex includes the Ralph H. Deets Historical Museum, filled with vintage memorabilia, and the Richard O. Jacobson Hall, a modern, interactive space where visitors can explore hands-on displays like livestock judging, Fair fashion through the decades, and even a simulated train crash. Together, these museums offer a fascinating journey through Iowa's agricultural roots, Fair traditions and timeless charm—all in one cool, educational stop.

### 3. Art Attack

Hours: 1 p.m. to 5 p.m.

Each day at the Iowa State Fair, Art Attack offers a "make it and take it" art experience. Designed for families, kids dive into colorful, hands on projects using markers, paint, collage and more, leaving with a special Fair memento. It's described as "just happiness, where young artists explore their imagination in a fun, interactive setting. Art Attack is located in the Cultural Center Courtyard.

### 4. Milking Experience

Hours: 11 a.m., 3 p.m. and 7 p.m.

Step into the Iowa State Fair Milking Parlor and discover the story behind your glass of milk. During the Milking Experience, a dairy industry expert walks you through the life of a dairy cow—from what she eats to how much milk she produces each day. You'll learn about the milking process, the cow's care and how milk is transformed into the dairy products we enjoy. This interactive, 15-to 20-minute presentation is both educational and engaging—perfect for curious minds of all ages.

## 5. Boulevard of Dairy Breeds

Hours: 9 a.m. to 8 p.m.

The Boulevard of Dairy Breeds gives Fairgoers of all ages the chance to learn about the differences between the six major breeds of dairy cattle and to see those breeds up close and personal.

## 6. I Milked A Cow

Hours: 9 a.m. to 11 a.m., 1 p.m. to 3 p.m., 4 p.m. to 6 p.m.

Cost: \$3 - NO ADVANCE TICKETS SOLD

Try your hand at milking a cow the old-fashioned way: by hand. Located in the Cattle Barn, this is truly a once in a lifetime experience, so don't miss it! All proceeds benefit the Iowa State University Dairy Science Club.

## 7. Cattle Corner

Hours: 9 a.m. to 8 p.m.

Did you know that a cow has four compartments to its stomach? Or that there are six major breeds of dairy cows represented in Iowa? You will get all your beef and dairy questions answered at this hands-on learning exhibit. You will also have the chance to take pictures as a beef or dairy farmer!

## 8. Avenue of Breeds

Hours: 9 a.m. to 8 p.m.

The Avenue of Breeds at the Iowa State Fair is a lively livestock showcase located west of the 4-H Building, featuring over 100 different breeds—ranging from cattle, sheep and horses to exotic varieties like elk, llamas and fish. It's staffed by enthusiastic FFA students who care for the animals and are ready to answer visitors' questions, offering both hands on learning and up-close encounters. Since the mid 1970s, this educational exhibit has served to teach Fairgoers where their food comes from and highlight the diversity within Iowa agriculture. It is organized and staffed by the North Polk FFA and alumni.

## 9. Horse Haven

Hours: 9 a.m. to 8 p.m.

Do you know how to measure a horse in hands? Do you know how many inches a hand measurement is? You'll learn this and more at Horse Haven! There are many horse-themed displays and photo options.

## 10. Sheep Stop

Hours: 9 a.m. to 8 p.m.

Get all your sheep questions answered at this sheep-themed exhibit. Flip the pages of a story book and have your picture taken at two different sheep photo boards along with putting together a sheep-themed giant puzzle!

## 11. Bruce L. Rastetter 4-H Exhibits Building

Hours: 9 a.m. to 8 p.m.

The 4-H Exhibit Building houses thousands of state winning projects crafted by hundreds of Iowa 4-H'ers. Watch talented 4-H'ers in Share-the-Fun skits and take part in working exhibits and educational presentations. This is the place to learn all about the world of 4-H!

## 12. Snakes Alive

Hours: 9 a.m. to 8 p.m.

Cost: \$3.50

Snakes Alive gives participants the opportunity to view snakes in glass enclosures in this walk-through exhibit and to have hands-on interaction with a live snake.

## 13. CIRC Model Railroad

Hours: 9 a.m. to 8 p.m.

Cost: \$3

Be awed in this ever-changing model railroad display. View more than 3,000 square feet of display that is 1/87th of actual size. With 10 to 15 trains going on this several mile track, you will see everything from a drive-in theater to Superman! The display features an “I Spy” style game for children of all ages.

## 14. DNR Building

Hours: 9 a.m. to 8 p.m.

The DNR Building, operated by the Iowa Department of Natural Resources, is where glass aquariums display native Iowa fish species. Information is given on how to identify fish from rivers, streams, and lakes in Iowa. It also provides information about hunting, fishing, snowmobiling, state parks, energy and recycling programs as well as conservation programs throughout Iowa. Be sure to check out the Fair’s daily program for events, classes and seminars on the day of your trip.

## 15. John Deere Agriculture Building

Hours: 9 a.m. to 8 p.m.

### Butter Cow

The iconic Butter Cow begins with a sturdy frame of wood, metal, wire and steel mesh, then gets sculpted with around 600 pounds of low-moisture, pure cream Iowa butter. Inside a 40-degree cooler, layers of butter are carefully added until the life-sized cow—standing about 5 ½ feet tall and 8 feet long—comes to life. Though smaller than a real dairy cow, the butter version could cover 19,200 slices of toast and would take an average person two lifetimes to eat. Much of the butter is reused for up to 10 years, and each year, a new themed companion sculpture joins the Butter Cow in the Agriculture Building cooler.

### Giant Pumpkin Display

This contest is for big squash type pumpkins. The Iowa State Fair record of 1,409 pounds was set in 2025. This contest is open to entrants from all states; so be sure to note where all the pumpkins come from!

## 16. The Garden

Hours: 9 a.m. to 8 p.m.

The Garden features fruits, vegetables and farm crops grown in Iowa. Smell, touch and feel your way through pizza and salsa gardens while learning about each ingredient. A must-see is the corn and soybean room.

## 17. Have You Herd? Presentations

Hours: Daily at 11 a.m., 3 p.m. and 5 p.m.

Have You Herd presentations are a way to provide livestock education from a unique perspective – from youth! Have You Herd allows the Fairgoer to meet, see, hear and learn from some of the Fair’s most passionate and knowledgeable exhibitors. Just outside the east entrance of the Sheep Barn, see these live animal demonstrations about raising and showing sheep, swine, dairy cattle, beef cattle, dairy goats, meat goats, chickens, rabbits, horses and even llamas!

## 18. Hy-Vee Fun Forest

Nestled in the shade of a 1½ acre green oasis dotted with trees and flowers, the Fun Forest Stage at the Iowa State Fair is a vibrant, family friendly hub for free entertainment. This colorful outdoor venue—sponsored by Community Choice Credit Union—hosts upbeat performances throughout the Fair. With ground seating and temporary bleachers, it’s the perfect spot for kids and families to sing, dance, laugh, and connect under the Iowa sky.

### Variety Star Playground

The Variety Star Playground is designed to inspire outdoor play and creativity. This new playground will have an agricultural theme with farm animals, complete with accessible ramps and smooth, easy-to-navigate surfaces. It’s a space where children of all abilities can play, encouraging physical activity, imagination, and friendship.





# Learning Destination Activities

## Farm Animals & Their Babies

### Paul R. Knapp Animal Learning Center

**Level:** Pre-K to 2nd Grade

**Skills:** Language Arts & Science

**Objectives:** Students will compare the physical similarities and differences of farm animal adults and their offspring. They will also identify the correct names of common farm animals and match the picture of an adult animal with the baby.

**Background:** Prior to the Fair, ask the students if they have ever been to a farm or petting zoo. Discuss the animals they saw and/or experienced. Write down their answers on a board.

**Ag at the Fair:** Tour the Animal Learning Center. Take in all the different farm animals and notice how big the mothers are and how small the babies are. See the differences in size and how many offspring each species has. Make sure to check out the hatchery to see the baby chicks hatching each day.

#### References

Iowa Agriculture Literacy Foundation <https://www.iowaagliteracy.org/Article/Farm-Animals-and-Their-Babies>

Midwest Dairy Association <http://www.midwestdairy.com/>

Iowa Beef Industry Council <http://www.iabeef.org/>

Iowa Pork Producers <http://www.iowapork.org/>

Iowa Turkey Federation <http://www.iowaturkey.com/>

Iowa Egg Council <http://www.iowaegg.org/>

Iowa Sheep Industry Association <http://www.iowasheep.com/>

Iowa Soybean Association <http://www.iasoybeans.com/index.php>

Iowa Corn Promotion Board <http://www.iowacorn.org/>





# Learning Destination Activities



## Ice Cream in a Bag

### Milking Parlor & Boulevard of Dairy Breeds

**Level:** Pre-K to 2nd Grade

**Skills:** Science & Literacy

**Objectives:** Students will learn about dairy and food science along with placing steps in sequence.

**Background:** Students will learn where ice cream comes from. They will also learn that it can be made in a classroom with the understanding that the freezing point of water is actually lowered by adding salt to the ice between the bag walls. Heat energy is transferred easily from the milk through the plastic bag to the salty water causing the ice to melt. As it does so, the water in the milk freezes, resulting in ice cream.

**Ag at the Fair:** Tour the Animal Learning Center. Take in all the different farm animals and notice how big the mothers are and how small the babies are. See the differences in size and how many offspring each species has. Make sure to check out the dairy hutches and see the baby dairy calves. These calves will grow up and become the mothers that produce the milk we buy in the grocery store and that you will be using to make ice cream.

#### Materials Needed

- 1/4 cup sugar
- 1/2 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1 cup milk
- 1 cup whipped cream or half & half
- Crushed ice (1 bag will freeze 3 bags of ice cream)
- 1 cup rock salt (approximately 8 cups per 5 lbs.)
- 1 quart and 1 gallon size Ziploc freezer bags
- Duct Tape
- Bath Towel

#### Instructions

1. Put the milk, whipped cream, sugar and vanilla in a 1-quart freezer bag and seal. For security, fold a piece of Duct Tape over the seal.
2. Place the bag with the ingredients inside a gallon freezer bag.
3. Pack the larger bag with crushed ice around the smaller bag. Pour 1/3 to 1 cup of salt evenly over the ice.
4. Wrap in a bath towel and shake for 10 minutes. Open the outer bag and remove the inner bag with the ingredients. Wipe off the bag to be sure salt water doesn't get into the ice cream.
5. Cut the top off and spoon into cups.
6. It makes about 3 cups (1 bag will serve 4 students).
7. Serve plain or add your favorite toppings. Enjoy!
8. Write an opinion piece and explain to the audience what your favorite ice cream topping is and why. Use complete sentences and illustrate the story once the writing is complete.

#### References

Midwest Dairy Association <http://www.midwestdairy.com/>



# Learning Destination Activities

## Making Butter



### Milking Parlor & Boulevard of Dairy Breeds

**Level:** Pre-K to 2nd Grade

**Skills:** Science

**Objectives:** Students will learn where milk comes from and what products it can be made into.

**Background:** Cows that are well cared for produce wholesome, healthy milk. The dairy farmer keeps the cows healthy by making sure they have plenty of green grass and hay to eat. All morning and evening, dairy cows are milked on farms across Iowa. Farmers used to milk cows by hand, but now the use of milking machines is much more common. The farmer milks the cows; the milk is then cooled and stored in a stainless-steel tank. The milk stays in the tank until it is time for it to go to the milk processing plant. When it is time to take the milk to the processing plant, a stainless-steel tank truck comes to the farm and pumps the milk from the cooling tank. The truck's tank acts like a huge thermos bottle and keeps the milk cool during the trip to the processing plant. When the milk arrives at the processing plant, workers take it and make it into many delicious, healthy things to eat. Some of the milk goes into the cartons you can get at the store or right there in the lunchroom at school. The rest is made into things like butter, cheese, ice cream and cottage cheese.

**Ag at the Fair:** Tour the Boulevard of Dairy Breeds, which will have three dairy cows of each of the six major dairy breeds in Iowa. There will be information on each of those breeds along with Iowa dairy experts to answer your questions. Also, be sure to watch the Story of Milk come to life at the Milking Experience at the Milking Parlor daily during the Fair.

#### Materials Needed

- Heavy whipping cream
- Baby food jars (with lids)
- Scale
- Bread or crackers

#### Instructions

Students will observe the process of changing one food form to another, such as a liquid to a solid.

1. Talk about where milk comes from and how milk is made into many products, such as butter.
2. Go through the safety procedures and importance of cleanliness with students.
3. Discuss the whipping cream in its liquid form and let the students know that a change will be taking place with the whipping cream.
4. Pour the whipping cream into baby food jars until half full.
5. Screw on the lids. Before shaking, carefully check to make sure the lids are closed securely.
6. Have the students take turns shaking the jar to “churn” the cream. The teacher should check the jars to see if the cream has separated into milky liquid and creamy solid butter.
7. Help student carefully pour off the liquid. Serve the homemade butter on bread and crackers.

#### References

Iowa Agriculture Literacy Foundation <https://www.iowaagliteracy.org/Article/Farm-Animals-and-Their-Babies>

Midwest Dairy Association <http://www.midwestdairy.com/>



# Learning Destination Activities



## Pumpkin Seed Counting

### John Deere Agriculture Building Yard

Level: 3rd to 5th Grade

Skills: Math

**Objectives:** Students will get a broader understanding about agriculture and the use of pumpkins. Students will learn about the life cycle of the pumpkin and the pumpkin industry. Students will practice math skills with measurements and make pumpkin pie in a bag.

**Background:** Pumpkins come in all different sizes. There are giant varieties and miniature ones, but the one thing all pumpkins have in common is all have seeds that they grow from. These seeds are also stored in the pumpkin. Talk to the students about how they may have seen these seeds when cleaning out a pumpkin at Halloween. Talk to them about using seeds to grow things and see if they remember how many seeds have been found in pumpkins they have cleaned out.

**Ag at the Fair:** Tour the Giant Pumpkin display in the John Deere Agriculture Building yard. There will be pumpkins of all different shapes and sizes.

#### Ingredients Needed for Pumpkin Patch Pie

- 1-gallon Ziplock freezer bag
- 1-quart Ziplock bag
- 2 2/3 cup cold milk
- 2 packages (4 serving size) instant vanilla pudding mix
- 1 can (15 oz) solid-pack pumpkin
- 1 tsp ground cinnamon
- 1/2 tsp ground ginger
- Crushed graham crackers
- 25 small cups
- 1 can whipped topping
- 25 spoons

#### References

Iowa Agriculture Literacy Foundation: Pumpkins Aren't Just for Carving! <https://www.iowaagliteracy.org/Article/Pumpkins-Arent-Just-for-Carving>





# Learning Destination Activities

## All About Milk!



### Milking Parlor & Boulevard of Dairy Breeds

**Level:** Pre-K to 2nd Grade

**Skills:** Language Arts, Math and 21st Century Skills

**Objectives:** Students will learn where milk comes from and what products it can be made into.

**Background:** Cows that are well cared for produce wholesome, healthy milk. The dairy farmer keeps the cows healthy by making sure they have plenty of green grass and hay to eat. All morning and evening dairy cows are milked on farms across Iowa. Farmers used to milk cows by hand but now the use of milking machines is much more common. The farmer milks the cows; the milk is then cooled and stored in a stainless-steel tank. The milk stays in the tank until it is time for it to go to the milk processing plant. When it is time to take the milk to the processing plant, a stainless-steel tank truck comes to the farm and pumps the milk from the cooling tank. The truck's tank acts like a huge thermos bottle and keeps the milk cool during the trip to the processing plant. When the milk arrives at the processing plant, workers take it and make it into many delicious, healthy things to eat. Some of the milk goes into the cartons you can get at the store or right there in the lunchroom at school. The rest is made into things like butter, cheese, ice cream and cottage cheese.

**Ag at the Fair:** Tour the Boulevard of Dairy Breeds, which will have three dairy cows of each of the six major dairy breeds in Iowa. There will be information on each of those breeds along with Iowa dairy experts to answer your questions. Also be sure to watch the Story of Milk come to life at the Milking Experience at the Milking Parlor daily during the Fair.

#### References

Iowa Agriculture Literacy Foundation: All About Milk! <https://www.iowaagliteracy.org/Article/All-About-Milk>





# Learning Destination Activities

## Math on the Farm



### Cattle Corner

**Level:** 2nd to 3rd Grade

**Skills:** Math

**Objectives:** Students will understand that farmers and other people in agriculture use math in their jobs.

**Background:** In Iowa, cattle are a familiar part of the landscape. Most of the cattle you see are beef cattle. In 2010, there were 3.8 million beef cows in Iowa, which would rank Iowa as seventh in the nation for cattle. Iowa has 209,000 dairy cows, which makes us the twelfth highest state in the nation for dairy cow numbers.

We get meat from beef cows and milk products from dairy cows. Since we get milk from dairy cows, they usually have very large udders. For those reasons, their basic shape is different from beef cows. The basic shape of a beef cow is a rectangle. The basic shape of a dairy cow is a trapezoid. Some common dairy cattle have markings that make them easy to recognize. Holstein cattle are probably the most recognized because they are white with black spots. But dairy cattle, like beef cattle, come in many different colors.

Because they are milked every day, dairy cattle usually stay close to the dairy barn. Beef cattle do not have to stay close to home and are sometimes moved from pasture to pasture. Sometimes, the fields are many miles away from the farmhouse. For that reason, the cattle you see in fields along the side of the road are more likely to be beef cattle.

**Ag at the Fair:** Be sure to check out the Cattle Corner located in the North Annex of the Cattle Barn. This area is dedicated to highlighting the differences and similarities between these two species.

#### References

Iowa Agriculture Literacy Foundation: Math on the Farm <https://www.iowaagliteracy.org/Article/Math-on-the-Farm>





# Learning Destination Activities

## A Bean is a Seed



### Little Hands on the Farm

**Level:** Pre-K to 2nd Grade

**Skills:** Science

**Objectives:** Students will learn about germination by sprouting beans and caring for them in small necklaces which they keep around their necks.

**Background:** When a seed gets warmth, air and water, it starts to change. The stem and the root emerge from the seed; this is called germination. Germination occurs if the seed is in a warm environment. We plant seeds in the spring, when the ground is warming up. The seed is the food for a baby plant until it can grow its own root system. A seed is germinated when it can grow without the food stored in the seed.

A bean is a plant seed. In Iowa, we grow soybeans as a crop. Soybeans are used in common products, like candy bars, linoleum and other building materials, ink used in newspapers, crayons, food like soy sauce and soy oil, lip balm, hand lotion and other makeup products. But in Iowa, we use soybeans to feed the world and farm animals.

**Ag at the Fair:** Tour Little Hands on the Farm and see more information on soybeans and how they are used in our state!

#### Instructions

1. Provide each student with one large and one small bean, a plastic jewelry bag and a cotton ball.
  - Students will place the cotton balls and beans inside the bags and moisten the cotton ball with a few drops of water.
  - Students will punch holes in the bags with a hole punch.
  - Students will string the yarn through the hole and tie ends to make a necklace.
  - Ask what conditions are necessary for a seed to germinate (moisture, warmth and sometimes darkness). Ask students where they might place the bags to provide the best conditions for germination.
  - Students will hang the bags around their necks and tuck them inside their clothes.
  - Tell students they are responsible for providing their bean seeds with the best possible care until they have sprouted.
2. Students will name their sprouts and tell their classmates their names.
  - Send home a note to the parents/guardians explaining the need for bean sprouts.
  - Students will record the progress of their seeds. Which ones grow faster? Each student can discuss the changes taking place in the sprout.
  - At the end of the three days, make a chart as a class showing how many of the seeds have sprouted.
  - After the students have cared for their bean sprouts for a couple days, they can discuss how the needs of the bean sprouts have changed and how they can be planted in a classroom garden.

#### References

Iowa Soybean Association <http://www.iasoybeans.com/index.php>