

## Wes Ertman 4-H Story 2024

My name is Wes Ertman, and I am 12 years old and have been in 4-H for three years. I joined 4-H to learn about taking care of animals and to help raise money to go to college. This year I took a market swine and a pen of three market chickens to the fair. I am a member of the Elk Mountain Outlaws 4-H club. I was also involved in shooting sports and did archery.

My market swine was a Hampshire Cross that I purchased from Max and Leslie Morris. It was nice to purchase from someone local because I got to pick my project soon after she was born. My goal for this year was to win showmanship. My chickens were Sapphire Splashes and I purchased them from Bomgaars. I had to special order them and the first batch that came in died because they got too cold in shipping. I worried that they would not make weight like my last year chickens. My goal for my chickens was to make weight and do well in showmanship. I did the archery shooting sports because this year I am able to hunt and wanted to make sure I could ethically dispatch an animal. The instructors were very helpful to get my shooting on point.

This year I helped to set up the fairgrounds for fair week. I really enjoy getting to know other 4-H members and learning about their projects and helping them during the week of fair. I have learned many lessons from my years of 4-H but most important is the ability to care for and attach myself to animals that I know will help feed people. The night of the sale is hard because of the bond that has been made with my animals but producing high quality meat and knowing that I gave my animals the best possible life is reassuring. This year my grandparents bought my market chickens, so I got to bring them home to add to my flock of laying hens. At the fair I did not do as well as I wanted in showmanship with my swine as I forgot to take my hat off for showmanship. Lesson learned I will have it off next year. I did well in showmanship of my chickens and got Reserve Champion.

My time spent practicing shooting my bow was very helpful this fall during hunting season. I was able to harvest a nice antelope buck out of a blind I set up over a water hole. I also harvested a calf elk while hunting with my dad. It is a nice feeling to be able to help feed my family with the meat I harvested.

4-H has helped me learn about the responsibility of taking care of animals. It has also gave me a community of kids to look up to in my projects and makes me want to set a good example for the younger kids in 4-H.