



Empowering the Next Generation: Youth for the Quality Care of Animals Awards \$29,500 in Scholarships to Future Industry Leaders

LINCOLN, NEB. – May 18, 2026 – Youth for the Quality Care of Animals (YQCA) is continuing its commitment to supporting future leaders of the livestock industry through education and youth development. In 2026, YQCA awarded \$29,500 in scholarships to 12 outstanding students furthering their education and pursuing careers in the agriculture sector.

More than 200 applicants from across the country met eligibility requirements and participated in the highly competitive scholarship selection process.

“This scholarship program represents the heart of YQCA’s mission, investing in young people who are passionate about agriculture, committed to responsible animal care, and dedicated to making a difference in the livestock industry,” said Dinah Peebles, Youth for the Quality Care of Animals Executive Board President. “The quality of applicants this year was exceptional, and we are proud to support these students as they pursue their educational and career goals.”

The 2026 scholarship recipients were awarded funds to support their continuing education. Scholarships were granted based on a combination of academic achievement, leadership, industry involvement, and commitment to agriculture.

- Joseph Schohr of Oroville, California, was awarded \$5,000 and will attend Kansas State University.
- Joeelyn Hernandez Montes de Oca of Woodland, California, was awarded \$4,000 and will attend Cal Poly.
- Mara Endres of Waunakee, Wisconsin, was awarded \$4,000 and will attend the University of Minnesota Twin Cities.
- Kylie Garner of Almond, Wisconsin, was awarded \$2,500 and will attend the University of Wisconsin-River Falls.
- Molly McCalla of Alhambra, Illinois, was awarded \$2,500 and will attend Murray State University.
- Elizabeth Zimmerman of Osseo, Wisconsin, was awarded \$2,500 and will attend Chippewa Valley Technical College.
- Hadley Reimers of Lincoln, Nebraska, was awarded \$2,500 and will attend Kansas State University.
- Cheyenne Obrecht of Harlan, Iowa, was awarded \$2,500 and will attend Iowa State University.
- Alison George of Mondovi, Wisconsin, was awarded \$1,000 and will attend the University of Wisconsin-River Falls.

- Raegan Hancock of Morriston, Florida, was awarded \$1,000 and will attend Mississippi State University
- Jackson McCurry of Colwich, Kansas, was awarded \$1,000 and will attend Kansas State University.
- Allie Whetstine of Wellman, Iowa, was awarded \$1,000 and will attend Iowa State University.

“As we reviewed applications, it was inspiring to see the many ways young people are finding their place in agriculture,” said Erin Dorsey, Youth for the Quality Care of Animals Executive Board Treasurer. “Whether they were raised in the industry or discovered it through opportunity and mentorship, these students demonstrate the leadership, integrity, and dedication that will shape the future of animal agriculture.”

Each scholarship recipient has completed YQCA certification annually throughout their livestock exhibition experiences and credited the program for helping shape their understanding of animal welfare, food safety, and industry responsibility.

The Youth for the Quality Care of Animals Scholarship was established in 2025. In the past two years, YQCA has awarded \$59,500 in scholarship funds to 19 students. To be eligible, students must be a high school senior or a high school graduate up to 21 years of age, have an active YQCA certification at the time of application, and have had an active YQCA certification for the previous two years.

Youth for the Quality Care of Animals is a national multi-species quality assurance program whose mission is to educate and empower youth in the livestock industry by instilling essential knowledge about animal welfare, food safety, and industry best practices.

“The continued growth of this scholarship program reflects the impact YQCA is making nationwide,” said Peebles. “By supporting these students today, we are investing in the future leaders, veterinarians, educators, and advocates who will strengthen agriculture for years to come.”

Investing in the future leaders of the livestock industry enables YQCA to support students passionate about livestock who are working to further their education. The 2027 Youth for the Quality Care of Animals Scholarship application will open in December 2026.

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About Youth for the Quality Care of Animals

Youth for the Quality Care of Animals (YQCA) is a national multi-species quality assurance program whose mission is to empower youth in the livestock industry by instilling essential knowledge about animal welfare, food safety, and industry best practices. YQCA is a nonprofit organization that launched in March 2017 as the result of a collaborative effort between state and national livestock leaders that previously offered multi-species youth livestock quality assurance programs, the National Pork Board’s Youth PQA Plus program, and representatives from other national livestock groups. YQCA is designed as an annual education and certification program focused on food safety, animal well-being and character awareness for youth ages 8 to 21 producing and/or showing pigs,

beef cattle, dairy cattle, sheep, goats, rabbits, and poultry. For more information about Youth for the Quality Care of Animals, visit yqcaprogram.org.