

Planning Your Junior Livestock Market Animal Project

Each year at the Cache County Fair over 300 4-H and FFA youth participate in the Junior Livestock program. These livestock projects are fun and provide a learning experience for the youth. More importantly, the project animal is a vehicle to teach valuable life skills like responsibility, caring, ethical behavior and how to present themselves to other people. Youth involved in a club learn leadership skills, how to conduct a business meeting and provide service to their community.

By this time of year, most youth have obtained their project animals or at least have made arrangements with a livestock producer to get their project animal. Market projects include hog, lamb, steer or commercial dairy heifer. Youth can show two animals in each species, or exhibit two different species of animal at the fair. Only one animal can be sold at the Junior Livestock Auction.

To participate in the program, 4-H youth must be in the third grade and at least 8 years old by January 1 of the project year and register with the County 4-H office. FFA youth must be a member of an FFA Chapter at Sky View or Mountain Crest High Schools.

To begin a market livestock project, all animals must be tagged in and entered into the project to assure the project animal is in the ownership and care of the exhibitor for a specified time. Tagging dates for market steers are April 20 in Paradise, from 4:30 to 6:00 pm, and April 21 from 9:00 to 10:30 am at Smithfield Livestock Auction. Market hogs will be tagged at the Cache Fairgrounds from 6:30 to 8:00 pm on May 10 and May 17, and again on May 26 from 8:00 to 9:30 am. Market lambs will be tagged on May 10 and May 17 from 5:00 to 6:30 pm and May 26 from 9:30 to 11:00 am. Commercial dairy heifer projects should be tagged on April 21 at Smithfield Livestock Auction from 9:00 to 10:30 am, or on April 27-28 at the Spring Dairy Show at the Cache Fairgrounds. Please plan now to bring your animals at the appointed times.

FFA advisors Extension Agents and club leaders are a great resource to help youth plan their project, but here are a few things to consider:

Market Lambs must weigh at least 100 pounds at fair time. Depending on frame size, a good weight for a market lamb would be 125 to 135 pounds. A good lamb fed a balanced ration will gain $\frac{1}{2}$ to $\frac{3}{4}$ of a pound per day. There are about 85 days from mid-May to the Fair. So, if you want your lamb to weigh 130 pounds at show time, he/she should weigh between 63 and 88 pounds at tag in time. Because the length of the tail or dock can influence other health factors, market lambs' tails must measure at least $\frac{7}{10}$ of one inch at tag in time to qualify for the Fair show.

Market hogs must weigh between 230 and 280 pounds at Fair time to show and sale. Hogs not falling into this weight range will not be exhibited. A good target weight for a market hog is 250 pounds. A good healthy hog will gain 1.5 to 2.0 pounds per day on good quality feed. Therefore your hog should weigh between 80 and 115 pounds at tag in time in May or about 35 pounds today. The Utah Department of Agriculture and Food requires all hogs brought to the fairgrounds and co-mingled with other hogs go directly to slaughter and not returned to any farm. This regulation requires a blood test negative for brucellosis, psuedorabies and PRRS (porcine reproductive & respiratory syndrome); vaccinated for leptospirosis and erysipelas, and have a health certificate with

an entry permit from the Department of Agriculture and Food to bring hogs into Utah from other states.

Market steers are generally selected in the fall and should be halter broke and on at least a partial grain ration by now. Steers must weigh at least 1100 pounds at Fair time. With 110 days from the tag in date to the Fair, a good healthy steer gaining 2.5 to 3.5 pounds per day, should reach market readiness at about 1250 pounds depending on frame size. With that in mind, market steers should weigh between 865 and 975 at tag in time.

Commercial Dairy Heifer projects allow youth interested in the dairy industry to raise and sell a dairy heifer the same way market projects are sold. The heifers can be any dairy breed and need not be registered with their respective breed association. Heifers need to meet current health regulations and should be at least 6 months pregnant at Fair time.

All classes of market animals do not to gain weight as well when the weather is hot and they will also gain slower when they are being walked and worked with each day. Some animals gain weight more readily than others, so it is important to monitor weight gain throughout the project to assure the animal will reach its optimum weight and market readiness come Fair time.

For more information contact the Cache County 4-H office at 435-752-6263 or on-line at <http://extension.usu.edu/cache>

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