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August 2008 4-H/Livestock/2008-01pr

Basic Tips for 1st Year Junior Livestock Market Projects

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Being a part of the Junior Livestock program is an exciting opportunity for 4-H and FFA members. Although raising and exhibiting an animal is a huge responsibility, the experience also offers tremendous rewards as you learn, meet new friends, and gain new knowledge and skills. This fact sheet is designed to help you know what to expect when you exhibit your market animal at your first livestock show or county fair, so you can be well prepared. Although this fact sheet may not provide all the details and guidelines for your specific county, it will help you know which questions to ask.

Eligibility: Each county has its own eligibility requirements to exhibit a market animal in the Junior Livestock program at the county fair. Residency, age and grade, membership in either 4-H or FFA, completion of a portfolio or record book, participation in educational clinics or shows, length of time of ownership of the project animal, where the animal is raised, etc., are common eligibility issues. Contact your county Extension office for the requirements.

Facilities: Once you are properly enrolled in the Junior Livestock program, your first step will be to make sure you have an appropriate place to raise your market animal. Your hog, lamb, steer, or goat will need an appropriate pen or lot with adequate space, shade, and fencing. You may also need to check on local ordinances regarding raising livestock in your neighborhood.

Purchasing: Once the facilities are prepared, you will buy your animal. Keep in mind that you will have to purchase your animal in time to have it tagged. Your local Extension agent, FFA advisor, club leader, or livestock supervisor can assist you in learning how to select a healthy, quality market animal.

Tagging: During tagging, a livestock identification tag is put in your animal's ear. In some counties, the animal may be tattooed as well. The tag and/or tattoo identify your animal and confirm that you have owned your animal for the minimum time required. Check with your county Extension agent for the tagging requirements and dates in your county.

Raising your Project Animal: It is a big commitment to feed, water, bath, groom, and exercise your animal, and keep its stall area clean throughout the summer. Raising an animal is a daily responsibility. After all, your project animal needs food, water, and exercise every day— just like you!

Your 4-H club leader, Extension agent, or FFA advisor can help guide you on caring for your project animal. The 4-H office has excellent resource manuals, which will provide you with

detailed information about selecting, feeding, grooming, training, and health maintenance for your project animal. Many counties also offer clinics, warm up shows, or have videos available for check out to help you learn how to fit and care for your animal. Some counties also have equipment, such as clippers, available for loan.

Records: Many counties require youth to maintain a written record of their 4-H or FFA project to be allowed to exhibit in the fair. These records summarize the income and expenses for your project, awards earned, and learning experiences. Contact your county extension agent or FFA advisor to find out the requirements for your county and learn how to keep the appropriate FFA record or 4-H portfolio.

Fair Passes: You will need to care for your animal throughout the fair, which will require you to go to the fair even on the days you are not exhibiting. Most counties provide passes for Junior Livestock exhibitors, either for free or for a nominal fee. Make sure to check the policy for your county.

Weigh-In: For Junior Livestock youth, the fair kicks off with weigh-in. Each species has a specified time to be weighed in, which is generally announced in the fair catalog or premium book. Make sure to carefully review the requirements for weigh-in. Typically, your animal will need to be washed and dried at weigh-in. You will lead your animal across the scale and officials will record its weight.

Minimum Weights: Each species will have a minimum weight requirement to be eligible to be exhibited in a market class. These minimum weights are generally listed in the fair catalog. Although it is disappointing if your project animal does not meet the minimum weight requirement, in many counties this does not mean you cannot exhibit in the fair.

Sifted Animals: An animal that is too light is referred to as a "sifted" animal. Often you are allowed to show your sifted animal in the showmanship class. In many cases you can also show it in a feeder class at the fair, as opposed to the traditional market class. Sifted animals are usually not eligible to go through the auction, but are sold at the established floor price.

Set Up for the Fair: Your club will be assigned a stall or pen area for your animals. The number of stalls or pens your club is assigned depends on the number of animals you are exhibiting. Space allocated each year depends on the overall number of animals in the fair. Prior to the fair, check with your county extension agent or livestock superintendent to find out the size and type of pens that will be used for your species, availability of automatic waterers, and whether shavings will be provided.

Displays: Most counties allow you to display a banner in your stall or pen area. It is common to include the following information: club name, animal's name, exhibitor's name, weight, and breed. Make sure to thank and recognize your sponsors and boosters. You will need to bring all the supplies for your club display, as well as the materials needed to hang it. Zip ties, wire, rope, etc., are commonly used. Make sure the banner is hung securely and is safely out of your animal's reach.

Supplies: A successful experience at the fair requires having the right supplies. Following are some things you will most likely need.

- **Bedding**—If not provided by the fair, you will need shavings, straw, or other bedding for your animal.
- **Broom**—Keep your assigned area and walkways neat.
- **Feed**—Your animal will need feed throughout the fair. Flies can be a problem, so bring feed in an enclosed container. Do not forget to bring feed and water containers.
- **Bucket**—You will need a bucket to haul fresh water to your animal (unless automatic waterers are installed).
- **Chairs**—You will spend a lot of time in the barn area, so you may want to bring chairs. Remember to keep the aisle area open for fair guests at all times.
- **Fans**—Many exhibitors bring a portable fan to help keep their animal cool. Check the policy for your fair. You will need to bring an extension cord for your fan and connectors to hang or mount it safely.
- **Grooming Supplies**—Make sure to bring a hose, grooming brushes, soap, spray bottles, etc., normally used to wash and groom your animal. Many sheep exhibitors put sheep blankets or tubes on their lambs to keep them clean.
- **Grooming Stands or Chutes**—Your animal should come to the fair already clipped or shorn, however minor fitting will be needed to get your animal show-ready.
- **Show Equipment**—You will need a halter, show stick, comb, whip, or other show equipment.
- **Show Attire**—Most shows have specific dress code for exhibitors. Check the requirements for your county. 4-H members are often required to wear a 4-H patch on their left arm while exhibiting.
- **Rake or Shovel**—You will need to remove droppings and soiled shavings from your animal's pen area frequently. Stalls and pens need to be maintained throughout the fair. This will also help reduce flies in the barn area.
- **Wheel Barrow**—You will need to haul droppings and soiled shavings from the barn to the designated waste area.

Showing: There are two types of shows in which you can exhibit—showmanship and market classes. In showmanship classes, the judge is evaluating your skills in fitting and showing your animal, rather than just the quality of your animal. In market classes, the judge is evaluating your animal. Of course, a good show person will ensure his or her animal is shown to its best potential in the market class, helping the animal place as high in the market class as possible.

- **Showmanship Classes:** These classes are typically divided by grade divisions. The 4-H grade divisions are: junior (grades 3-5), intermediate (grades 6-8), and senior (grades 9-12).
- **Market Classes:** Once all the animals have been weighed, they will be grouped into different classes based upon weight. Classes will be posted prior to the market show.
- **Feeder Classes:** If your project animal did not weigh enough to show in a market class, you may have an opportunity to exhibit in the feeder class. Check the regulations in your county.

Junior Livestock Auction: The steer, lamb, and swine shows at the county fair are market shows. As market animals, they will be sold at auction at the conclusion of the fair. Some

counties also include market goats in the sale. You will want to invite potential buyers to come to the auction to purchase animals and show their support for livestock youth.

Preparing for the Auction: All market animals will be sold at auction at the conclusion of the fair. You will wash and prepare your animal just as you did for the show. You will follow the same dress code as for the show. The order in which each species is auctioned will be announced prior to the auction.

Shrinkage: Your market animal's weight at weigh-in is usually not the weight it is sold for during the auction. A percentage is usually deducted for shrinkage, which is the loss in the body weight of livestock during the stress of the fair and preparation for sale and shipping. Two to three percent shrinkage is common. For example, if your steer weighed 1400 pounds at weigh-in, it would be auctioned as a 1358 pound steer (assuming a 3% shrinkage rate). Check the policy for your county's fair.

Sale Order: Each exhibitor will go through the auction in a certain order, which is typically based upon how your animal placed in the market class. The sale order will be posted prior to the auction. Staff and volunteers will assist you in lining up in the correct order. You must go through the auction in the correct order, so be prepared and ready to line up.

Sale Method: During the auction, your market animal will be sold. Some auctions sell the animal by the pound; others sell the animal by the head. You will want to make sure your potential buyers understand the procedure in your county. The person who buys your market animal generally has the choice of flooring the animal or having the animal processed for their own use.

1. *Flooring the animal.* If your buyer does not want to keep the animal they purchase, they can floor the animal and pay only the difference between the final bid price and the established (floor) market price. The floor price is set prior to the sale and is based upon current market prices. For example, if the buyer bids $2 per pound for a 250 pound hog (250 lbs x $2/lb = $500) and the floor price is 65 cents per pound (250 lbs x .65/lb = $162.50), the buyer will actually pay $337.50 and the packer will pay $162.50; the packer will take the animal.
2. *Having the animal processed for their own use.* The buyer will pay the full bid price, plus the cost of processing the animal. The buyer will receive the animal.

Sales Fee: Each fair will assess a small fee, generally a percentage of the final price, to pay for the expenses, premiums, and awards associated with the Junior Livestock program. This amount will be deducted from the check received for the sale of your animal.

Boosts: Some counties allow supporters to boost an exhibitor. A boost is a financial gift to reward a youth for his or her outstanding work. To boost a youth, the booster fills out a boost form and pays the auction administrator the amount he wants the member to receive.

Thanking Your Buyer: As soon as you secure your animal after going through the auction, thank your buyer for his or her support. Some youth choose to take their buyer a gift at this time.

Preference for receiving a thank you gift at this time varies widely among buyers—some enjoy it, and some find it burdensome to carry gifts back to their vehicle across the fairgrounds. Use good judgment for your buyer. *Most importantly, thank your buyer immediately.*

After the fair is over, promptly follow up with a neat, well-written thank you letter to your buyer. A thank you gift presented in person after the fair is over may be a more appropriate way to show your appreciation to your buyer. Next year, acknowledge your buyer and boosters on your club display.

Representing Junior Livestock: Thousands of people come through the barns at the fair. Often this is the ONLY time they ever learn of 4-H or FFA, so what you do, how you look, and how you behave has a *huge impact* on the reputation of the Junior Livestock program. Do your part to be a great ambassador by following these guidelines:

- Keep your animal fed, watered, and comfortable throughout the fair. Check on your animal regularly.
- Keep your area clean at all times.
- Keep the aisles open so people can walk through the barns and see the animals.
- Answer questions graciously.
- Be on your best behavior. You reflect on everyone in 4-H and FFA.

As you can tell, there is a lot to learn to purchase, care for, exhibit, and sell a market animal. Fortunately, there are many resources to help you succeed. In addition to helpful advice from your parents, club leader, FFA advisor, and 4-H extension agent, there are numerous publications. Ohio State University's sheep, beef, and swine resource manuals are excellent 4-H publications that cover safety, selection, management, health maintenance, nutrition and feeding, marketing, fitting and showing, and ethics. Contact your local Extension office to purchase a copy. Most importantly, have fun as you make new friends and have exciting new experiences as a Junior Livestock exhibitor.

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This publication is issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension work. Acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914, in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Noelle E. Cockett, Vice President for Extension and Agriculture, Utah State University.