

4-H ANIMAL WELFARE

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Fair season is rapidly approaching once again. 4-H youth should be sure to present their animal projects to the benefit of the animal and the public. This behavior is encouraged both in and out of the show ring.

Animal welfare is a growing concern in this country today and warrants some attention during county fairs and any other 4-H livestock event. Livestock exhibitors should be aware of the fact that animal welfare and animal rights groups have been known to show up uninvited at county fair livestock events. Therefore, it is imperative that we show all general audiences at these livestock events that we as keepers of animals do know the right way to raise and care for livestock.

While we are at the fair showing livestock we are under the watchful eye of the general public. This gives us a great opportunity to show all kinds of people the method in which we care for our livestock.

The following is a list of guidelines, which should be helpful in preventing any misconceptions that the public or any special interest groups may have about the way we raise livestock. The proper care of animals in a public setting should receive primary attention.

1. Provide fresh, clean water to all animals at all times.
2. Keep your pens clean and dry with good bedding at all times.
3. Be aware of animal comfort zones, i.e. temperature, space.
4. Sort and load animals safely and with concern for them.
5. Train animals to lead or be handled at a young age before the fair. This will make them more manageable at the fair.
6. Arrange for veterinary care in case of an animal emergency.
7. Handle animals in a very humane way.
8. Adhere to all antibiotic, drug, and water or feed additive withdrawal times.
9. Animals should be fed on a routine basis.
10. Avoid stressing the animal.
11. Keep animals clean – a clean animal is viewed as a healthy animal.
12. Use show sticks, whips, and canes for showing only and try to use them as gently as possible. Do not use electric prods.
13. Review your 4-H project manual and follow the care recommendations. This is also a good way to answer any questions the public may have.
14. Have a plan of action if a problem should arise and who to contact to help solve it or answer questions.
15. Know who and where fair officials are and how to get in contact with them.
16. If questioned about animal care by a stranger, remain calm, be polite, answer the questions the best you can, don't argue, and refer the person to the department superintendent if a tough question or situation arises.

ETHICAL PREPARATION FOR THE 4-H FAIR

As 4-H is an educational program and not a competitive one, the main objective of the 4-H Show is to evaluate each 4-H member on his or her knowledge of their project. In non-livestock projects this involves conferencing with the judge about what one learned, why he or she made certain choices concerning their project, and what improvements could be made. Conference judging is utilized by 4-H to continue the learning process for each 4-H'er, not simply to grade the child's product. It is an expectation of all 4-H members to prepare their exhibit for the fair. Parental teaching and guidance is certainly encouraged, but should not dominate a 4-H'er. A 4-H exhibit should clearly represent what the 4-H'er is capable of doing and what they have learned.

Similarly, it is an expectation that each 4-H'er be responsible for care, fitting and grooming of their animal projects during the 4-H year and at the fair. The Extension office recognizes that there are always circumstances and safety issues to consider. But, we expect each 4-H family to see to it that its 4-H'er is doing as much of the animal's care, fitting and grooming as possible. Parents are certainly encouraged to teach their children and assist when necessary. Please be responsible and reasonable with this issue. Rather than focusing on winning, 4-H focuses on helping youth learn and becoming the best that he/she can be.

Thank you for helping make the 4-H Fair a learning experience for youth.