

Marketing your 4-H LIVESTOCK

4-H members have a unique opportunity to gain valuable life skills through their 4-H livestock projects. In addition to gaining such skills as communication, critical thinking, financial management, organization, responsibility, and leadership through their project involvement, the 4-H member also has the opportunity to receive a premium price for the animals that they market through the Sale. Many youth use the money gained from their 4-H projects to help pay for college.

Thinking like a business person is essential to being successful. From the very beginning of your project identify potential buyers to purchase the end product. Know what your expenses are, and be able to calculate your breakeven price. Successful completion of a market livestock animal project includes recruiting buyers to bid on your animals during the sale. You should contact buyers several months prior to the fair to allow them ample ability to plan time to attend the auction and budget for their purchase. Contacting potential buyers early also allows you the chance to build rapport with the buyer and answer any questions they have.

Who Should Send Buyers Letters?

Every person marketing an animal through the livestock auction at the fair should send letters to potential buyers inviting them to attend the auction and encouraging them bid on your animal.

When Should a Buyers Letter Be Delivered?

Letters can be sent any time prior to the fair. Exhibitors should contact buyers to ensure that at least 2 buyers will be bidding on their animal. Keep in mind that not every buyer you contact will place a bid so it is necessary to contact several potential buyers. You may consider sending a letter of introduction near the beginning of the project and a follow up letter closer to the fair. Some exhibitors prefer to wait until summer break when they have more available time to work on marketing.

Who are potential buyers?

Buyers can be businesses, families, individuals, relatives, grocery stores, wineries, coaches/mentors, or groups of people; be creative. You should be certain to contact people that have supported you and the auction in the past as well as people that have never attended before. Contact people your family knows (friends, neighbors, relatives, etc.), people you do business with (gas station, grocery store, dentist, insurance, bank, carwash, organizations, etc.), and with the guidance of an adult, people and businesses that you don't know. Many people and businesses are not aware of the junior livestock auctions that take place at the fair.

Most buyers at the auction take into consideration several factors when bidding:

- did you send them a letter or invite them to the fair
- did you send a thank you to them if they bought your animal in the past
- does your family conduct business with them when possible.

How to Write a Buyers Letter:

Buyer letters should be written in business format, and addressed to the manager or specific person responsible for purchasing at the auction. The letter should be personalized; it can be handwritten or typed—never generalized (do not send letters “To Whom it may concern”) or photocopied (hand sign each letter). Letters can be mailed, but many buyers prefer to meet with you in person. If you are unable to meet in person, you may consider including a picture of you and your project animal in the letter.

What to include in a Buyer Letter?

- ✓ Introduce yourself – age, grade, name of 4-H Club
- ✓ Information about your project – lamb, pig, goat, steer.
- ✓ How many did you raise this year, breeds etc.?
- ✓ What have you learned this year from your project?
- ✓ What were challenges or things you enjoyed?
- ✓ What have you worked the hardest on this year?
- ✓ 4-H involvement – officers, committees, meetings, conferences, teams, etc.
- ✓ Plans for future 4-H involvement and projects
- ✓ Are you going to raise two lambs next year?
- ✓ Are you going to run for office?
- ✓ Plans for future education. College, Junior College, trade schools, etc. programs?
- ✓ Leave contact information so a buyer can reach you to find out more information
- ✓ Include pictures of you and your animals. Pictures of you doing something with your animal (injection, clipping, showing etc.) are even better
- ✓ Proof read your letter
- ✓ Always include When and Where the auction takes place.

Personal Appearance with Buyer:

When approaching a potential buyer, you are not only marketing your animal, but also yourself and your organization. Often time's youth are nervous or scared about making this contact. Marketing your livestock project animal is a great opportunity to develop stronger communication skills and build self-confidence. Parents and club leaders can help you overcome your anxiety by practicing together before visiting with potential buyers.

Go in PERSON to deliver your letters. Some businesses receive hundreds of letters – going in person IN YOUR UNIFORM or YOUR CLUB SHIRT will make you stand out even more!

Take another 4-H member or friend with you if you are not comfortable going yourself. It is best to meet with buyers in person when possible, but a hand written letter can be sent in the event that you are unable to establish a meeting time. When meeting with a potential buyer it is appropriate to introduce yourself with a handshake. If the person you are marketing to knows your parents you may also include that connection in your introduction. Some of the important talking points to highlight during your conversation include:

- Your 4-H club
- Your projects
- What you have learned
- Your future plans
- When & where the Sale is
- How to register to buy

Marketing & salesmanship efforts pay off for 4-H members at the County Fair livestock Sale

The following information can be shared with your buyer to help explain the sale process.

My Marketing Plan

Animal Information:

Species:

ID:

Information about my animal: (what it was fed, how old is it, why is this animal a good choice to purchase?)

Top five reasons a buyer would want to purchase my animal:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Buyers I will contact:

Contact Name Address

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.