People raise animals for human use or benefit such as food, clothing, work, research, companionship or entertainment. Farmers and animal owners are morally and legally responsible to care for their animals. As such an individual, you provide your animals with appropriate food and shelter while ensuring they are not subjected to unnecessary pain, suffering and excessive stress. You are responsible for the well-being of animals in your care and must not tolerate animal neglect or abuse. As an animal owner, you should take pride in the fact that you choose to care for your animals properly.

People have varying views about animals

Realize that not everyone you meet at a fair or exhibition may agree with your view of animals. Some people do not find it acceptable to use animals for food, clothing, research or even companionship.

If you are confronted by a group or individual with opposing views, always be courteous and respectful. If they have questions or concerns, help them find an advisor, leader or fair superintendent they can speak with. When you respond, maintain your composure and concentrate on your story about why you are involved in 4-H or FFA and how you take care of your animals.

For more information
Contact Dave Baker, Assistant Dean, Agriculture and National Resources Extension, University of Missouri, 2-28 Agriculture Building, Columbia, MO 65211.
Animal science, project development and character education

4-H and FFA members are exposed to animal science, project development and character education through curricula in school or a livestock quality assurance program like Beef Quality Assurance, Pork Quality Assurance Plus or Missouri Show Me Quality Assurance. Age-appropriate teaching strategies help ensure that animal owners understand good production practices.

We all have the right to know that products from animals are wholesome and safe, and the animals that produced the product were cared for properly.

Animal science, project development and character education focus on the following good production practices:

• Provide proper animal handling and care.
• Ensure that animals are provided adequate space, feed and water supply.
• Establish an efficient and effective animal health management plan with your veterinarian.

As an animal owner, you should understand the importance of the following concepts and strive to follow them.

• Produce a wholesome, high-quality and safe food product for consumers.
• Understand that as animal owners your responsibility is to care for the animals’ basic needs.
• Value the real purpose of the youth animal projects program as an opportunity to develop life skills.

As an exhibitor, you are considered a producer. The public will develop opinions based on what they see, hear and perceive at an animal exhibition, and they will relate that perception to the entire animal industry. Animals exhibited at the fair account for a small percentage of all animals in production; however, animals at the exhibition are in the public eye.

You should be able to compare and contrast the differences and similarities between different types of animal production systems. Remember, your animal is on display and the practices you use to prepare it for the show could impact the animal industry.

Commonly asked questions

As an exhibitor, you may be asked questions. The responses below may help you prepare. You should discuss other questions with fellow exhibitors and leaders.

Why do you dock tails, clip teeth, castrate and trim beaks?

• Practices such as these protect the animals from each other, prevent disease and help us produce safe and nutritious food.
• When we perform these tasks, we make sure to use proper techniques and equipment, and only experienced or properly trained personnel perform them.

Why are some farm animals raised indoors?

• Sows in stalls and hens in cages receive individual care and are protected from the weather and wild animals.
• Raising farm animals indoors allows us to provide a safe, clean environment for producing high-quality food products and minimizing environmental risks.

Why are antibiotics used on farms?

• It is important to keep animals healthy to produce wholesome, high-quality food products.
• Our veterinarian has created a solid health program that addresses prevention and treatment of disease for our animals.

Why do you use showsticks, halters, etc.?

• They enable us to move animals more safely.
• Equipment is used only as a communication tool and requires lengthy preparation and training.