

LIVESTOCK

Procuring Animals



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SECTIONS

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INTRODUCTION

Whether it is your first livestock purchase or you have become a regular at the sale barn, it is wise to know what you are looking for when purchasing livestock. Having a plan for procuring animals that promotes your goals and protects your farm's biosecurity has compounding effects on your entire farm. Using available tools such as health checks, pedigree/genetic data, and production data, producers can set themselves up for success.



How To Get Started

Once you have decided on a species to raise and/or breed, producers can narrow down their production goals to help them decide when and where to purchase stock. Understanding how livestock sales occur—i.e. single producer sales, consignment sales, private sales, etc—will help producers to source livestock from across the United States and Canada. Livestock sales will vary by species and production type, for example if purchasing bred beef cows, they are typically sold in the fall months.



SECTION 1

Where to Go to Purchase Livestock

Livestock can be purchased through different avenues, and each option will have its own advantages and disadvantages. Remember that all newly purchased animals should be isolated from animals already on the farm to protect from potentially spreading diseases (please reference the Health Management and Disease Prevention section for more information).



Before purchasing livestock, research the current market value of animals to give you an idea of how much to budget for potential purchases. If purchasing breeding stock animals, keep in mind that these will be the foundation of your breeding program.

Sale Barn

Sale barns are a standard route for producers to sell cull animals, market-ready animals, and some young stock. Some sale barns host breed stock sales for a variety of species. Animals at sale barns are sold “as is” “where is” and producers may be provided with little or no background information about animals available for purchase. Sale barns sell animals from many production sites at the same time; this can lead to biosecurity concerns due to potential comingling of animals from different herds/flocks.

Auction – In-Person or Online

Auctions provide an opportunity to view a set of livestock that are currently available for sale. Auctions could be sole producer sales or sales that make animals from various farms available to the public. Auctions can be held live at a specific location, date, and time or online for a set duration of time. All auctions will vary in the information that is available on livestock beforehand or during the auction. Be aware that you may need to pay a bidder fee or auction fees and arrange for transportation for any livestock that are purchased.

Direct Sale

Producers can buy animals directly from another producer. Local associations, such as a cattlemen’s association or breed association, may provide a list of potential sellers. Be cautious of on-line sales for livestock and always visit the farm, or have a trusted individual visit for you, and inspect the animal and the producer’s management practices.



SECTION 2

How to Purchase Livestock

There are many ways to purchase animals. It can be done solely by the producer or through a livestock buyer's agent.

Hired Livestock Buyer

Producers can hire a livestock buyer to purchase animals on their behalf. This option can help producers find animals that meet their specific set of criteria and increase the number of available animals across states or nationwide due to the livestock buyer's connections within the industry.

For any purchasing option, you will also need to plan how to transport the animal from the site of sale to your farm. Producers may have their own truck and trailer to provide their own transportation or can contract an animal hauling service. Auction barns or species/breed associations often have a list of livestock haulers. For more information on agriculture-related transportation safety, read this [guidebook on transportation guidelines in Michigan](#).



SECTION 3

Pre-purchase Considerations

Health Checks and Testing

Before purchasing and bringing livestock to your farm, it is wise to have a health check performed by a licensed veterinarian to assess the health of the livestock. Some producers may be able to provide documentation of health records.

Pedigree and Production Data

Access to a pedigree, production, or genetic data will provide producers with greater insight. Production data can give producers an idea of what the animal's phenotype and genotype are and how they will impact their production goals.

If purchasing registered livestock at the time of sale make arrangements for the official registration to be transferred.

Required Identification and Travel Documents

When purchasing livestock, be sure they have federally/state regulated identification, if needed, before transport. Animals crossing state lines are required to have a Certificate of Veterinary Inspection. More information [can be found here](#).

Securing a Bill of Sale

When purchasing livestock be sure to always obtain a bill of sale. A properly completed bill of sale should include the seller's and buyer's information, animal descriptions or identification numbers, purchase price, date of sale, and any health certifications or guarantees. Keep copies as part of your permanent farm records. A bill of sale may need to be provided to an insurance company for liability and coverage needs or for income tax purposes.



PROCURING ANIMALS

COMMON QUESTIONS

01

How do I prove ownership of newly acquired animals?

This can be done with a properly completed bill of sale. Registered animals may have a registration transfer form.

02

What should I consider when deciding which animal to buy?

After producers decide upon their production goals, they should select animals that meet their needs. Any livestock that are being considered for purchase should be sourced from a healthy herd/flock that is free from disease.

03

Are there any regulations when purchasing livestock?

There may be health regulations governing animal movement. Unless livestock are sold with a written guarantee, they are generally sold “as is” and “where is”.

04

How do I know if the animals I want to purchase are healthy and up to date on vaccinations?

You can ask the previous owner for veterinary records and be sure to purchase from a reputable source. Producers can employ the assistance of a veterinarian before or after a sale to identify the health status and future recommendations.

05

What’s the best way to get my newly purchased animals to my farm?

You can provide your own transportation or pay a livestock hauler for delivery.

Necessary resources and Partners – Please see Livestock Resources and Partners Appendix at the end of this chapter.